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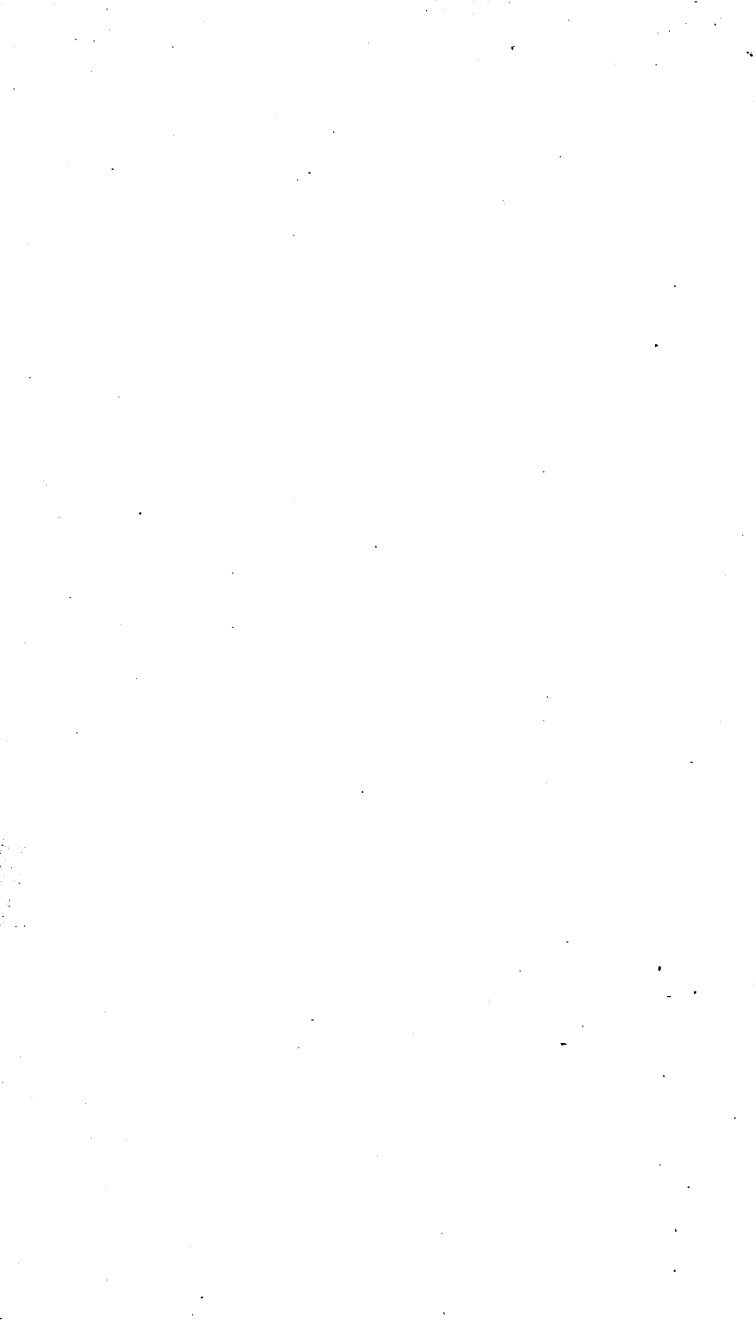
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Testimony of Christ to Christianity.

“Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.”—MATTHEW AND LUKE.

THE
TESTIMONY OF CHRIST
TO
CHRISTIANITY.

BY
PETER BAYNE, A.M.
" "
AUTHOR OF "THE CHRISTIAN LIFE," "ESSAYS IN BIOGRAPHY AND
CRITICISM," ETC.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

It is with a melancholy perception of its defects that I offer this little book to the world. In elaborating a subject so profound in interest, so transcendent in importance, so glorious in general character, the toil of years would have been worthily expended, and the severest intellectual labor would have been but more intense enjoyment. I have been able to devote to its composition only those hours which I could snatch from the occupations of an absorbing profession. To think and write down the argument at

first hand, with hardly a glance at the literature of the subject, was a necessity of the circumstances. That literature, however, it is just to state, is one with which I have long been intimately acquainted. My precise argument has not, to my knowledge, been previously exhibited; and I believe I have here stated it intelligibly, and placed it on an impregnable basis. Entertaining this confidence, I must regard the question of publication as affirmatively decided without any consideration of choice.

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THE

Testimony of Christ to Christianity.

CHAPTER I.

THE ARGUMENT INTRODUCED AND STATED.

You have never doubted that Christianity is from God; and you regard with indifference, if not dislike, those formal reasonings by which the religion of Christians is proved to be Divine.

You may have reached manhood in a commodious and goodly dwelling. Safe in its shelter in infancy, pleasantly expatiating in its chambers in boyhood and youth, satisfied with its outlooks on the surrounding country, and hearing in its every apartment a soft music of remembered love and household charity, you have never thought of inquiring into the soundness of its masonry or the stability of its foundations. And your spiritual history has furnished a parallel to all

this. In the Christian Church first opened the eyes of your mind. Reason, imagination, feeling, conscience, will, grew insensibly under Christian influences. Your intellectual stature has not been stunted; your moral health has not been impaired; you have felt no want; you have known no danger; the light streaming through those windows has fallen on your heart like dew of heaven,—dew touched with the radiance of eternal dawn: and you have never inquired how this Christian house of God, in your eyes so beautiful, endeared to you by associations tender as of the home and sacred as of the temple, was founded in the world.

Your state of mind secures a certain felicity; nor can it be said that you altogether fail in the Christian obligation of being prepared to render a reason for your faith. Experience of moral and intellectual health, promoted by Christianity, is the logic by which you satisfy yourself, the bloom of your Christian graces is the logic by which you seek to convince others, that Christianity is a supreme, God-sent blessing.

Nevertheless, is there not something to be said against you in such a time as this? You

accept your religion as a faith; you feel it as an emotion; you illustrate it as a rule of conduct. But do not a thousand signs of the time point it out as a duty of Christians to be ready to challenge for Christianity the sternest inquisition of the intellect? The sentimental, to a large extent the ethical, parts of the discussion have been settled. Christianity is allowed to be a beautiful religion, favoring a devout imagination, encouraging the flow of the finer feelings. A nun, veiled in white, bending before the altar, an angel painted in the cloister-studio of Angelico, a child praying at its mother's knee, are pretty objects. Nor is it disputed that Christianity has done something, or even much, for the ethical education of mankind. But the question now put by skeptics is this: Is Christianity, as a whole, *true*? Is its moral excellence that of a fable, or that of a fact? Is it not only God-like, but from God? Does it fit in among the realities of human history? A fact it plainly purports to be, and a most extraordinary fact. The first glance at its records discovers a series of prodigies, and every maseuline mind must perceive that they are mixed up inextricably

with the truth and worth of Christianity. Raising the dead, quelling the tempest by a word, creating food for multitudes—these, and similar wonders, stand out on the face of the Christian record like bold hieroglyphs on some Eastern monument. Nor is this all. Between your time and that when those preternatural occurrences took place, intervene eighteen hundred years. Languages, manners, nationalities, civilizations, have changed. To prove such things, had they taken place yesterday, might be difficult; you must render convincing proof that they were realities, after a lapse of nearly two thousand years; and if you do not, the robust and searching intellect of the age will remain unsatisfied. Two things go to the coloring of the earth—the one is light, the other is iron: ethical truth and historical verity are blended in Christianity; and we never fully appreciate its evidence until we know how the heavenly beam of its morality rests on the framework of its recorded fact.

Apart from any special demand of the time,—confining our regard exclusively to the individual Christian life,—can we feel that we intelli-

gently know our faith, if, having received Christianity as a treasure from our fathers, and in midst of a civilization which sprung out of Christianity, we cannot assign it its place in the spiritual history of the world? Is it either seemly or profitable for us to know no more of our religion than we might have known if we had been born in an unvisited isle of the Pacific, and had found our Bible amid the surf of the shore?

But can a knowledge of the evidence of Christianity, comprehensive, symmetrical, and conclusive,—a knowledge embracing not only its moral excellence, but its historical actuality,—be attained by men engaged in the breathless struggle of modern existence? Christians, and the opponents of Christianity, have a right to expect so. Christianity claims to be a religion which “he who runs may read;” the reading intended must be presumed to be an intelligent and a complete reading; and if we are right in deciding that Christianity cannot be historically a fable and ethically Divine, it must be an easy matter to evince the certitude of its being a fact.

Now, I believe that Christianity does bear with it the evidence required. There is, I con

ceive, within reach of men of ordinary information,—requiring, in fact, hardly anything beyond the Gospel records,—a proof to be found of the Divine origin of Christianity, so powerful, so exhaustive, that we may calmly invite its scrutiny by the acutest opponent, and so simple that we may teach it to our children. It is this proof I am now to endeavor to exhibit. Should I be successful, I shall have put it in the power of many a devout and earnest believer in Christianity to be relieved from an uneasy feeling, now, I am assured, experienced by such in the presence of the skeptic,—a sense that there is a flaw in their harness of Christian defence,—a painful consciousness that on the question of the historical verification of Christianity they must be silent. And I shall have enabled Christian parents, though immersed in the toils of business, to communicate at their firesides that amount of instruction touching the historical evidence of Christianity which, in days like these, and, indeed, in all days, every boy and girl in a Christian family ought to possess.

From the cloud of witnesses to Christianity, I select One. He is the centre of that cloud, the

chief witness to the Divine religion, both ethically and historically — Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Ascertaining, on strict historical grounds, the testimony of Christ to His own religion, I shall show that it contains irrefragable evidence that the Christian religion is from God. The argument, formally stated, is this:—

The conjunction of celestially pure, moral teaching, with exercise of creative or miraculous power, in the case of a religious teacher, demonstrates his mission to be Divine.

The personal testimony of Christ renders it indubitable that His teaching was pure, and that He wielded creative might.

Therefore, the mission of Jesus Christ was Divine, and what He said of Himself and of His religion is true.

The establishment of the second of these propositions will constitute the most novel and distinctive part of the present treatise; but attention must, in the outset, be directed to the first. The evidence of miracle, and the connection between miraculous works and Divine revelation, will be our subject in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER II.

THE LOGIC OF MIRACLE.

§ I.—OF MIRACLES AS MATTERS OF FACT.

I OFFER at this point no definition of a miracle. When the word is used in the following section, it is meant to indicate such acts as walking on the sea; converting water into wine, and imparting life to the dead.

Works like these have been pronounced by some incapable of proof. The most celebrated argument to this effect is contained in Hume's *Essay on Miracles*. He maintains that no conceivable testimony could prove the dead to have been recalled to life.

There is little in the premises of Hume's argument which, on philosophical grounds, I should be disposed to call in question; there is nothing whatever in those premises which it is here necessary for me to dispute. We can, therefore, meet Hume at once on his own ground.

"It is experience only," he says, "which gives authority to human testimony; and it is the same experience which assures us of the laws of nature. When, therefore, these two kinds of experience are contrary, we have nothing to do but to subtract the one from the other, and embrace an opinion either on one side or the other, with that assurance which arises from the remainder." Agreed; so far as the present argument is concerned. I believe, indeed, that the word of one true man is surer evidence than the experience of nature's uniformity for a thousand years, and that the spiritual philosophy which accords this supremacy to the deliberate accents of reason and conscience, which owns the majesty of man as transcending the authority of nature, is infinitely more profound than the philosophy of Hume. But in testing the evidence of such acts as have been mentioned, let experience be matched against experience.

"When any one," proceeds Hume, "tells me that he saw a dead man restored to life, I immediately consider with myself whether it be more probable that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact which he relates

should really have happened. I weigh the one miracle against the other ; and according to the superiority which I discover, I pronounce my decision, and always reject the greater miracle. If the falsehood of his testimony would be more miraculous than the event which he relates, then, and not till then, can he pretend to demand my belief or opinion."

Exactly ; no statement could be more reasonable. Let us proceed, then, to the comparison. The Christian has to produce testimony to miracle whose falsehood would be a mightier wonder than the miracle attested, and Hume has to weigh miracle against miracle.

What was the next step to be taken in Hume's argument ? What did his own statement require him to do ? Clearly, to take up the miracles which Christians allege to be true ; to set their evidence fully and distinctly forth ; and to point out that, however plausible that evidence might be, its fallaciousness would be no miracle compared with the miracle it affirmed. This, I say, is what the law on the case, as laid down by Hume, required ; this is what, in his own court of evidence, Hume prescribed.

But every reader of Hume's *Essay* knows that he has done nothing of the sort. The nature of the evidence required for the Christian miracles once fairly stated, those miracles are quietly put by him out of court. The trial proceeds by proxy. Hume does not ask what proof is offered that the Christian miracles took place; he calls to the bar certain "miracles" with which Christianity has nothing to do, enters upon their evidence, condemns them as falsities, and then calmly informs the court that the Christian miracles are disproven. *Vespasian*, according to *Tacitus*, performed two miraculous cures; the *Cardinal de Retz* mentions a "miracle" of the reality of which he was assured; and sundry prodigies are said to have taken place at the grave of the *Abbe Paris*. These last, Hume informs us, "might, with some appearance of reason, be said to surpass in evidence and authority" the miracles of the Saviour. But it is really too much to ask us to take his judgment in such a case. Our folly would be unexampled and inconceivable if we did not insist upon putting aside his instances of miracle, and claiming what he has himself accorded us, the right to select a crucial instance of our own.

There is not, to my knowledge, in the whole range of literature an evasion like that in Hume's *Essay on Miracles*. I can find no word, no figure of speech, no parallel case, by which adequately to represent its enormity. If we suppose a man of the highest character put on trial for his life, informed of the law by which he is to be judged, then bidden to stand aside until some one who claims a distant relationship to him, and has no character to plead, is tried in his stead, and lastly recalled to be told that he is capitally condemned, we shall have no more than faintly shadowed forth the outrageousness of Hume's proceeding. "Jesus Christ," he virtually proceeds, "is alleged to have given sight to the blind. He may stand aside; here is a miracle performed by the god Serapis, — a bull with some speciality about the tail, — through instrumentality of Vespasian, and we shall take it up instead. Jesus Christ is said to have made the lame walk. Well: the Cardinal de Retz was informed that a man who rubbed holy oil on the stump of his leg recovered powers of walking; yet there was no miracle, and, of course, none was performed by Christ. Jesus is affirmed to have raised the dead. We shall prove

the negative if we can make it appear that certain persons falsely or mistakenly alleged themselves to have derived advantage from touching the tomb of Abbe Paris." Such is literally Hume's mode of applying his theory that the occurrence of a miracle must be a greater wonder, and, therefore, less credible, than the falsehood or mistake of any conceivable testimony to the miracles related in the Gospels.

Now, I accept Hume's law; but I decline to have the Christian miracles represented by those which he adduces. His wonders I shall indeed take up, and shall point out that their evidence falls infinitely short of that for the true miracles. But, first, I shall exercise the right which is manifestly mine to choose an instance in which false evidence would be a greater wonder than actual miracle. I lay my hand on the testimony of Jesus Christ to the fact that he raised the dead. The falsehood or mistake of that testimony would, I submit, be a greater miracle than its literal correctness. Before we return to Hume, therefore, we must have the testimony of Christ fairly examined.

Mr. Baden Powell, in his argument against

miracles, aimed at greater philosophical precision and profundity than Hume, and failed signally to attain them. Hume's procedure was essentially to sum up probabilities, and to conclude that those against a miracle rendered its having happened so supremely unlikely, that examination of the evidence of miracle in particular cases was unnecessary. His mistake occurred in the summing up of his probabilities; he omitted a kind of testimony, the probability of whose falsehood he would have found less than the probability that a miracle had occurred. But Mr. Powell passed from Hume's probability against miracles, accumulated by induction, to certainty that they must be false, derived from *à priori* considerations. He asserted the order and constancy of physical causes to be "a primary law of belief." He spoke of "the positive scientific idea," of the "order of nature," of "the grand foundation-conception of universal law," and the "impossibility" of any change in the existing conditions of material agents, "unless through the invariable operation of a series of eternally-impressed consequences" of a physical nature. He argued, therefore, that the mere

dictate of reason requires and empowers a man to disbelieve in a miracle.

It is necessary to exercise care in distinguishing the position on this question taken up by Mr. Powell. He did not expressly refuse to look at the evidence of miracle, considered as matter of fact. So, at least, I understand him to mean, when he says that a miracle may be regarded "as a physical event," and "investigated by reason and physical evidence." But he insisted that even this investigation should be carried on in the light of a particular theory — namely, that the fact is referable to "physical causes," and has "ceased to be supernatural." I submit, on the other hand, that what is called a miracle admits, in the first instance, of being examined as a fact pure and simple, without theory of any kind, without reference to cause, physical or spiritual, natural or supernatural; and I maintain this to be the true philosophical procedure in the case.

Is there, then, a "primary law of belief," rendering it absolutely binding on the intellect to regard every conceivable fact, attested by the

senses, as a link in a chain stretching from eternity to eternity of physical causes?

Primary laws of belief there assuredly are, and reason requires my submission to them. All the testimony in the world could not make me believe that the angles of a triangle are equal to more than two right angles. It is entirely legitimate, also, that I should take along with me, in every inquiry, the fact that the angles of a triangle are equal to precisely two right angles; and if, in any case of evidence, a contravention of this fact is implied, I am not required to cast another glance at it. All this is, on my part, matter neither of attainment nor of choice. My mind can no more disbelieve mathematical truth, when its terms are comprehended, than it can, by mere effort of will, pass out of existence. If the Bible required me to believe that twice two are five, it would be out of my power to do so; if mathematical truth were violated by any of the Gospel miracles, I should be justified by common sense in not even examining their evidence.

But it is surely in the power of common sense, as it is certainly in that of philosophy, to discern

that the imputation of mathematical necessity to the sequence of natural phenomena is a complete subversion of reason. The century intervening between Hume and Powell was rich in physical discovery, and contributed magnificent illustrations of the extent, the harmony, the steadfastness of nature's laws; but it is strange that even such a century should have led any one to believe the evidence of inductive science identical with that of mathematical truth. One marks with wonder the fanatic vehemence with which Mr. Powell insists that stones fall, trees grow, and planets wheel around the sun, by laws immutable as those of geometry. To this mystic faith in nature's sequences, to this novel and marvellous enthusiasm, arid as the desert, hot as a brick-kiln, it is as incredible that the cloud I see flitting yonder from east to west should have been flitting from north to south, as that a mathematical whole should be less than a mathematical part. Into the depths of the past eternity sweeps the chain of physical causes directing the way of that cloudy film; and there is no power in the universe, no spirit, no God, that could have modified the smallest

link in the chain. It is a strange faith, but a very ghastly one. The *completeness* with which Powell banishes spirit-power from the universe is terrible. You must not admit even the possibility that any present fact should have a supernatural spiritual cause; and "the idea of 'creation'" in the past is "rejected." Out of the far eternity, guided by no hand, rattles the chariot of the universe; into the far eternity, bearing no rider, rolls that chariot away; no God in the past, no God in the present, no God in the future; and, for the Father of the generations of men, for the Spirit of light, of life, of love, the infernal mockery of a "grand foundation-conception of universal law," and some unimaginable "spirituality," which is but a term for nonentity.

"My God! I'd rather be

A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;

So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,

Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,

Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn."

So long as the human intellect continues unchanged, such faith as Mr. Powell's must remain

the peculiarity of the individual scientific dogmatist, the fixed idea of the individual scientific fanatic. It requires, therefore, no further refutation.

It will be well, however, to look somewhat closely into those laws of nature which are pronounced so austere, that constancy of nature which is declared to be, even in idea, inviolable.

Materialists maintain with one voice that we are unable to detect *connection* between nature's causes and nature's effects. We observe, for instance, that fire applied to wood consumes it, but we detect no *power* in the fire to consume wood; prior to observation, we have no reason to believe that fire will not cause stones or water to break into flame. We mark a succession of phenomena; the *nexus* between them, if any such *nexus* exist, we cannot discover. Such is the view of nature's laws adopted without qualification by Mr. J. S. Mill, and held by the whole Positivist school.

What is the attitude in which these gentlemen stand towards facts purporting to be observed and ascertained? It ought to be, and in most cases it is, one of open-minded watch-

fulness. Observation has revealed to them an order in certain phenomena, which order they call a law, but they are prepared at any moment to accept the evidence of observation against it. The law of to-day may, they know, be discredited by the fact of to-morrow. Should movements, for example, be observed in the stellar heavens, irreconcilable with the law of gravitation, the old law would stoop to the new fact, and the magnificent discovery of Newton would be annihilated by the simple evidence of the senses. Should two facts be observed, irreconcilable, apparently, either with known laws or with each other, then philosophers would believe both. They might suspend judgment; they might extend observation; they might institute experiments more delicate and comprehensive; but so long as each fact rested on its own unimpeachable evidence, they would accept it.

In all this they would but prove themselves true disciples of the Baconian philosophy. That philosophy concerns itself comparatively little with laws. Its ordinances are directed to fact, and the observation of fact; and the first of its pre-

cepts is to honor with implicit confidence the seeing eye, the hearing ear, the touching hand, the truth-speaking tongue.

—“The truth-speaking tongue” — that is an important addition. ^(a) Observation is the instrument used by the individual in cultivating science. But the observation of the individual cannot carry science far. What is the cement which joins observation to observation, which connects that of one generation to that of another, and from the facts ascertained by individuals builds up the experience of the race? There can be but one answer. The child may speak it; the philosopher can add to it not one jot or tittle: the knowledge of mankind is aggregated by testimony. And all sound philosophy accords to well-sifted testimony the same respect as to accurately-made observation.

Now, it is here claimed, on behalf of the alleged facts of Christ's life, that they be treated like any other facts purporting to be accurately observed and attested. Let the word “miracle” be put aside. Did Christ walk on the sea? Did He cause the dead to arise? Did He give sight to the blind by a word? Did He feed multitudes with a few loaves and fishes? Let no

question be put as to how He did these things, or whether, in doing them, He suspended the laws of nature. The inquiry was, Are they matters of fact? They are more startling than ordinary occurrences; let their evidence, then, be more rigidly scrutinized. Was the eye which saw them filmed by enthusiasm, or unsteadied by agitation? Was the ear which heard of them dulled with prejudice, or opened wide in credulity? Was the tongue which reported them set agoing by any selfish motive? Did falsehood misrepresent, or stupidity misconceive, or fanaticism distort, or imagination invent them? Hang the scales of evidence with such delicacy that they will quiver at the touch of a sunbeam; sift each grain of proof with lingering reflection, and search it with vigilant sagacity; let judgment look with her most steadfast gaze, and suspicion with her keenest glance: but if, when the facts of Christ's life are thus weighed in the balances, they are *not* found wanting, let them, in God's name, be believed. Nay, since the appeal is to philosophy, let them be accepted for her sake. If observation and testimony are scorned, not because they cannot endure scrutiny

and cross-examination, but because the facts attested are declared *à priori* incredible, the rivets are taken out of human knowledge, the fabric of philosophy crumbles into dust, and the eye of man, seared by the lightnings of his pride, is no longer a fit instrument for observing, in its comprehensiveness, the universe of God. Let science, if she will, wait for another explanation of the mighty works of Christ than that offered by Christians; but if she refuses to acknowledge well-attested fact, she will act suicidally. She may have saved herself from being carried in the triumph of the Gospel, but she will have laid the aspic on her breast.

§ II.—OF MIRACLES AS EVIDENCE FOR THE DIVINE ORIGIN
OF A RELIGION.

The claim of mysterious and unprecedented occurrences, be their character what it may, to have their evidence tried as matters of fact, is one thing; the proposition that such occurrences may constitute, in whole or in part, evidence that a religion is from God, is another.

Viewed in this light, miracles occupy the boundary line between natural religion and a revela-

tion added to the religion of nature. Their evidence is addressed to the believer in a God, and connects itself with the knowledge of God, which commends itself naturally to man's reason and conscience.

The sum of truth touching the Deity, arrived at by natural religion, is comprised essentially in two ideas: that God is omnipotent, and that he is holy. Infinite power, infinite purity: such is the twofold conception of Deity which finds its germs, if not its development, in the natural reason and the natural conscience.

The idea of power seems to come first in the order of time. "The only point of theology," says an acute and learned reasoner, "in which we shall find a consent of mankind almost universal, is, that there is invisible, intelligent power in the world." In the initial stages of civilization, when the great truths, the mighty thoughts and hopes, "which make us men," are breaking faintly through the haze of moral and intellectual dawn, the Deity is vaguely imaged as a force transcending the force of man — a force with which it is vain to contend — a force which generally is cruel as it is terrible. The votary kneels before the

hideous, blood-stained idol, not loving, not revering, only trembling. The light from beyond tinges the atmosphere of earth with a lurid glare, and there is no mercy in the voice of the thunder. As intellect develops, and man emerges from the cowering and squalid misery of savage existence, his deities become humanized. More and more the threads of law are seen running through creation; the idea of a unity of those threads in a single hand becomes more distinct; and the Greek poet soars to the conception of the entire universe bound by gold chains about the feet of Zeus. Philosophy, meanwhile, struggles towards the same elevation, and if it cannot discover a living God, names at least a Cause of causes. Neither the popular mind, indeed, nor the philosophic inquirer, has been able without Divine aid to realize steadily the idea of one creating, all-powerful God. It is when this magnificent truth is unveiled, sunlike, by the Almighty himself, that it is flashed back from the mirror of finite intellect. What the human mind could not conclusively discover, or permanently retain, it can trace the grounds of when revealed, and discern that the might of the universe centres in God.

At the utmost limit of mere human attainment the Bible *commences*: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

If the idea of power as pertaining to Deity has been embodied in all religions, the idea of moral purity as an attribute of the Divine character has also, though less firmly, been apprehended. It is no doubt true, that in neither of the great families into which the religions of nature are divided, the polytheistic and the pantheistic, has the light of moral purity been held steadily before the eyes of men. But among nations which have retained any healthiness and natural freshness of mind, the habit of honoring the gods has always been more or less associated with a belief in their sympathy with virtue. In the earlier period of the Roman Commonwealth this was conspicuously the case. The reflective action of the human intellect in philosophy tended to the same result. The Socratic influence, working through the whole Platonic development, and presenting the highest and purest reading of man's moral intuitions to which unaided reason attained, exalted the moral element in the Divine, and imaged God as infinite *rightness* as well as boundless power.

It is to the first of these ideas—the idea that God is the Infinite Power—that miraculous evidence in support of a religion is primarily addressed; but the logic of miracle rests fundamentally upon both. No one who has, with anything of Christian profundity, embraced the idea of God's holiness, can believe that the mere mechanical exhibition of power could afford valid grounds for believing a religion Divine. As the spiritual significance of Christ's miracles, and their conjunction with immaculate teaching, will be found to bear directly on the historical evidence that they took place, I must dwell for a little on the association of moral perfection with supernatural power in every miracle that Divinely seals a religion.

It has been said that false religions lean towards the acknowledgment that the gods are on the side of virtue. But so faint and confused has been this acknowledgment, that we, as Christians, can plainly discern the highest moral elevation reached by heathenism to have been *defiance* of the deity. The sublimest thing known to me in antiquity is the still small voice of conscience, speaking with conscious and inalienable suprema-

cy, and quelling the greatest known *power* in the universe. Horace, in the grandest passage he ever wrote, completes his picture of the just man with the declaration that not even the great hand of thundering Jove could make him quail : —

“Justum et tenacem propositi virum,
Non civium ardor prava jubentium
Non vultus instantis tyranni
Mente quatit solida, neque Auster,
Dux inquieti turbidus Adriæ,
NEC FULMINANTIS MAGNA MANUS JOVIS.”¹

More magnificent still is the idealization of the same thought in the tragic poetry of Greece. Æschylus felt that Zeus could chain Prometheus on his rock, and set the vulture to tear out his throbbing heart ; but he felt also that the unjust god was inferior to the tortured mortal, and that the vulture could never tear out self-approval, or

¹ “Not the rage of the people, pressing to hurtful measures, not the aspect of a threatening tyrant, can shake from his settled purpose the man who is just and determined in his resolution ; nor can the south wind, that tumultuous ruler of the restless Adriatic, nor the mighty hand of thundering Jove.” — *Smart's Horace*, Book III., Ode 3.

the sovereign sense of right, from that agonized bosom.¹ In the wrinklins of the brow of Prometheus, we may read that moral law is a higher, a greater, a mightier thing, than all the material power in the universe.

Now, it is in the God of Christianity, and in Him alone, that infinite power and infinite justice, holiness, and truth are combined. The just and the true Christian does not defy the God in whose hand the thunders rest, because he knows with immovable assurance that those thunders are directed by justice, winged with mercy, and clasped about with love. If, however, we admit that an exhibition of mere power could silence conscience, if we grant that a miracle apart from, or in contradiction to, moral purity, is sufficient to induce us to bend the knee, — we place ourselves on a lower stage of moral elevation than the just man of the Epicurean Horace, or the vulture-torn hero of Greek tragedy.

The principle on which I proceed was recognized by the greatest of English apologists, — per-

¹ It is now generally doubted by philologists whether this is the moral purport designed by Æschylus for his great drama. The question does not affect the pertinency of the illustration.

haps the greatest apologist, and certainly one of the greatest philosophers, that ever lived,—Bishop Butler. A professed revelation, Butler declared, might “contain clear immoralities or contradictions; and,” he adds, “either of these would prove it false.”¹ Paley never grasped Butler’s doctrine of conscience, and his discussion of the miraculous evidence of Christianity has too much the air of a mere mechanical theory. The Christian miracles can be proved as mere historical facts, and Paley’s treatment of the historical question is masterly; but in order to know them in their full significance,—in order to associate them with the spiritual verities of Christianity,—in order to recognize their validity in support of a religion,—we must remember more distinctly than Paley that they were exhibitions of Divine power by a Divinely Holy Saviour, in the promulgation of Divinely pure doctrines. Instead of impairing their strict force in evidence by thus regarding them, we secure and enhance it.

It is now in place to say explicitly what is here meant by a miracle capable of constituting part of the evidence that a religion is from God.

¹ Analogy, Part II., Chap. 3.

A miracle is an occasional display of Divine power, independently of those sequences of natural law through which God commonly acts.

We now occupy entirely different ground from that on which we stood when considering the evidence of miracles as mere matters of fact. If miracles are regarded as works of God, we are led to a different theory of nature's constancy from that of the materialistic philosophers whose views we examined. We may, indeed, agree with those reasoners, that we cannot *see* or *touch* the power which associates nature's causes with nature's effects; but mighty instincts, intellectual and moral, compel us to believe that such a power exists, and that it is none other than the originating Mind of the universe, the Almighty One who created and who sustains all things.

What, on this hypothesis, is the constancy of nature? It is the mode in which the Almighty puts forth His power, the majestic consistency of His will, the measured music in which creation hymns His praise. He is faithful; He is in nature changeless; in the ordinary providential government of the world He maintains the regularity of His working. But the laws of nature are

laws by which He regulates, not laws by which He is bound. The vision of existence, infinite in beauty, ineffable in constancies of traceless change, is "the garment we see Him by." And if, for purposes of unfathomable wisdom, He waves aside that garment, and makes bare His arm, — if, when men forget God for His long silence, and take nature for Himself, He pierces her muffling imagery by the lightning of His power, and acts independently of her processes, — shall we deem His acting incredible?

Nature is a constant revelation of God to man, *after* He has, so to speak, announced Himself. But nature alone never brought man into the presence of God, or kept him long mindful of his Father. Man would have sunk again and again into polytheism, if God had not, from era to era, said, in accents clearer than those of nature, "Lo, I am here!"

In the earliest ages the flickering flame of Divine knowledge would have expired altogether, but for His reluming hand. Superstition and atheism would have divided mankind, but for the spark of Divine life, kindled immediately by God, that lived in the heart of patriarch and sage.

But when the light of primeval revelation was vanishing from the earth, He broke silence, revealed Himself miraculously, and through long Pagan centuries preserved in the hills of Judea a faith in one God.

When the husk of ancient civilization was to be thrown off, and the expansive energy of a religion for all mankind was to be added to the moral and intellectual agencies operating on the mind of the race, — when ancient superstition was sinking in pale ashes, and philosophy was hanging her head in despair of finding truth, and vice was attaining satanic dimensions, and misery was reaching an intensity as of hell, — then, once more, did the God-force beckon nature to be still, and in person of the Holy Jesus, wielding the might of pure Deity independently of all natural sequences, reveal that religion which, if but realized and universal, would brighten the hills of earth with the hues of heaven's landscape, and bring angels down to dwell with men in earthly valleys.

Miracles are thus shown to be in harmony with a higher constancy than that of physical nature, a constancy of eternal purpose and everlasting wisdom, a constancy of mercy in the moral gov-

ernment of the world, a constancy of creative power varying at pleasure its modes and habits.

It is explicitly affirmed by Mr. J. Stuart Mill that on this view of the constancy of nature, — on the hypothesis that the governing power of the universe is an infinitely wise and Almighty God, — a miracle is no infraction of nature's harmony and concord, and, of course, not beyond reach of proof.¹

Another philosopher, on whose cool, clear intellect and massive sense Englishmen place peculiar confidence, preceded Mr. Mill in an express and decisive affirmation to the same effect. "Every rational thinking man," said John Locke, "must conclude as Nicodemus did: 'We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these signs which thou doest, except God be with him.'"²

A greater than either Locke or Mill had anticipated both in a similar statement. Lord Bacon declared that, "in regard of the work of redemption," to which "all God's signs and miracles do

¹ System of Logic, Chap. 25. ² Locke's Discourse of Miracles.

refer," the Almighty could indeed "break the law of nature by miracles." The Saviour is called by the father of modern philosophy "a Lord of nature in His miracles."¹ I know not, in fact, where the whole logic of miracle is so admirably apprehended as in the writings of Bacon.

There are defenders of Christianity in the present day who hint in various ways that miracles are rather incumbrances than helps in exhibiting evidence that the religion of Christ is Divine. It will be time to pronounce finally upon this opinion when we ascertain the place assigned by Christ himself to miracles in His testimony to His Messiahship. Meanwhile, I may remark that the Christian revelation purports to extend our *knowledge* as well as to direct our life; and that a man's personal excellence, however great, could not authenticate statements made by him, touching spiritual things unseen by man, and spiritual relations determined not by man but by God. I must, for my own part, declare myself in the position of those thinkers who have professed their inability to conceive any other mode than the miraculous, in which God could set His seal to

¹ Bacon's Confession of Faith.

the *information* conveyed to the world by a celestial messenger speaking in His name. And whatever the devout but dreamy theorist or the feeble sentimentalist may allege, tremendous is the might of that instinct which teaches unsophisticated man to impute authority to miraculous manifestations of Divine Power, which leads him trembling to ask, when winds and waves are hushed at the word of Christ, What manner of man is this ?

Instead of being an incumbrance in the way of the Christian apologist, the fact that a strictly evidential character is imputed to miracles in the New Testament, is a powerful and sublime illustration of the superiority of the Christian religion to every other which has appeared in the world. It was Locke, I think, who first clearly affirmed that the Divine religion alone appeals to miracles. The religions of Paganism, he pointed out with admirable force and pertinency, could not base their pretensions upon exhibitions of Divine power, because they were not *exclusive*. Polytheism recognized the authority of a thousand gods in a thousand localities, and each of the thousand could act upon the affairs of men. The

Jewish religion alone made clear the truth that there is but one God; the Jews only knew that the power of Jehovah was supreme, and that all other gods were idols dumb; the Jews alone, therefore, could attach significance to a miracle as manifesting the presence of the Infinite Power. They did not rise to a conception of the spiritual verity of Christ's teaching; but even in asking a sign they stood higher than the whole Pagan world. The Power that created and sustains this universe is Divine; power transcending the power of nature, and the emulation of devils, must be from God: this magnificent truth of natural religion, this irrefragable logic of miracle, was held firmly by the Jew, not by the Greek. And if miraculous energy was of old the seemingly and conclusive refutation of that superstition which peopled every wood and valley with gods, so in these last days, when science has passed to the opposite extreme, and asserts that there is *no* Divine controlling power in the universe, — that matter moves eternally to its own hoarse music, and obeys eternally its own mechanical laws, — that spirit may be a faint, inconceivable light, shimmering through the universe, but can exert

no force independent of the forces of matter,— we also require, and ought to hold fast, the attestation made by Christ, in raising the dead, quelling the tempest, and producing food from nothing, that the Divine Spirit is the Omnipotent Maker of the world. We have not yet arrived at a stage in human progress at which to discard the lessons taught to former generations; nor can it be a safe and wise allegation that the writing of God's hand has waxed old. Pride was the besetting sin of man in the beginning, and it will apparently beset him to the end. It led him once to cast back God's fair gift of Eden, and it tempts him now to turn from those goodly trees and beauteous flowers of truth which, from age to age, God has planted in the garden of spiritual knowledge. Unless we preserve in its integrity the idea that universal power centres in the hand of God, we shall, with all our culture, relapse into Polytheism; and I do not believe that this idea can ever be firmly embraced unless we accept the fact of miracle.

CHAPTER III.

CHRIST'S TESTIMONY TO CHRISTIANITY HISTORICALLY ASCERTAINED.

OUR business is to adduce proof that Christianity is Divine; we must guard against taking for granted what we have to establish. Christians are justly offended by the ironical homage to their religion implied in Hume's remark, that it dispenses with evidence, as required by reason, and reposes securely upon faith; but their conduct in some instances lends color to the skeptical innuendo. They shrink from speaking of Christ and of Scripture in the sole manner which the unbeliever they address can admit to be legitimate. If we set out with the supposition that Jesus is God, and that the Bible is inspired, our duty is confined to kneeling before the One, reverently perusing the other, and calling on all men to do the same. Argument is in that case at an end; there is room only for exhortation and appeal. But if our object is to

convince the doubter or to inform the ignorant, our procedure must be different. Do we seek to prove that He who appeared to the eye of sense a mere man was indeed the Son of God with power? We must set out from that humanity touching which there can be no doubt. Do we aim at showing that the Scriptures, seeming to the bodily eye like any other bound volume, are the record, inspired by God's Spirit, of God's special dealings with our race? We must approach them by the path of history; we must evince their reliability, in the first instance, on mere historical grounds. In the assembly of Christians we shall sing hymns to Christ; on Mars Hill, we must start from an unknown God.

It may be useful to Christians who have never known a doubt to approach the subject in this manner. As the forms and colors of the clouds which have been floating over us since infancy are seldom observed with care, or known with accuracy, so the facts of Christ's life, which have been before our mind's eye since childhood, are apt to lose distinctness and angularity,—to waver in a mirage-like enchantment of distance and devotion,—to be realized with no

precision or minuteness. Yet, the more any one reads and reflects, the more will he be convinced that Christianity is to be known in no way so well as by looking boldly and closely into its facts. And as for the objections of skeptics, I hold no conviction more firmly than that our urgent and importunate demand, addressed to the Carlyles, the John Stuart Mills, the G. H. Leweses, and whatever else there may be of able mind among us refusing to own the religion of the Bible as God's express revelation to man, ought to be just this—that, apart from any theory, they will look Jesus Christ in the face, and try to account for Him as a historical character. Let us press through the throng of centuries—let us get near Christ—let us touch the hem of His garment,—then will virtue go out of Him to heal us, and to conciliate or to abash opposition.

What does history inform us that Christ said for Himself?

As we reach the earlier centuries of our era, before Christianity has become universally the religion of Europe, we find it assailed by various adversaries. Among these, in the fourth,

third, and second centuries, were Julian, Porphyry, and Celsus. These all — the fact is notorious — referred to Christ as having *professed* Himself able to work miracles. They considered those miracles an exhibition of magical arts; but they never thought of doubting that Christ *said* He was endowed with miraculous power.

The Jewish accounts of Jesus of Nazareth are to the same effect. The Talmudical literature, commencing in the second century, gives prominence to Christ's alleged miracles. "The later Jews," says Mr. Baden Powell, in "Essays and Reviews," "adopted the strange legend of the *Sepher Toldeth Jehsu* (Book of the Generation of Jesus), which describes His miracles substantially as in the Gospels, but says that He obtained His power by hiding Himself in the temple, and possessing Himself of the secret ineffable name, by virtue of which such wonders could be wrought." Mr. Powell quotes also from Limborch this statement of Orobio, a Jewish writer: — "The Jews disbelieved not because they denied that the works which are related in the Gospels were done by Jesus, but because they

did not suffer themselves to be persuaded by them that Jesus was the Messiah."

We have arrived at one clearly indubitable and highly important fact. The portrait of Christ, as projected on the mirror of profane history, is the portrait of a professed miracle-worker.

But have we any account of Christ, dating from His own time, or near it, drawn up by persons who knew Him, or were intimately acquainted with those who did, and, on the whole, possessing historical reliability? I shall answer the question in a way which is new, but which, though simple, will, I think, be satisfactory. By a bridge which may seem narrow, but which will prove inflexibly strong, we shall be able to place ourselves among the contemporaries of Christ, and to hear what they have to say of their Lord.

Tacitus, treating, in his *Annals*, of the fire of Rome in the reign of Nero, mentions that it was ascribed by common report to the emperor, and that his majesty took means to suppress the rumor. The circumstances are thus detailed by Tacitus:—"Nero judicially accused of the offence, and punished with most studied torments,

a set of men, hated for their wickedness, who were commonly called Christians. The author of that sect was Christ, who, in the reign of Tiberius, suffered death by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate. The vile superstition, repressed for a time, again broke out, not only in Judea, the nest of the mischief, but in the city also, whither all atrocious and scandalous things flow, and where all flourish. At first those only were apprehended who confessed themselves of that sect; afterwards a vast multitude discovered by them, all of whom were condemned, not so much for the crime of burning the city as for their enmity to mankind. Their executions were so contrived as to expose them to derision and contempt. Some were covered with the skins of wild beasts, that they might be torn to pieces; some were crucified; while others, having been daubed over with combustible materials, were set up as lights in the night time, and thus burnt to death. For these spectacles Nero gave his own gardens, and, at the same time, exhibited there the diversions of the circus, sometimes standing in the crowd as a spectator, in the habit of a charioteer, and at other times driving a chariot

himself; until at length these men, though really criminal, and deserving exemplary punishment, began to be commiserated, as people who were destroyed, not out of regard to the public welfare, but only to gratify the cruelty of one man."

The historical character of this passage is undisputed. "The most skeptical criticism," says Gibbon, whose authority in such a case is absolutely conclusive, "is obliged to respect the integrity of this celebrated passage of Tacitus."

Apprehending firmly this statement of the great historian, let us particularize a few facts which it puts beyond doubt:—

A religious sect, which had originated in remote Judea, a land held in contempt and detestation throughout the civilized world of antiquity, had become, in Nero's time, a "vast multitude" in the city of Rome.

This sect took the name of Christ. They were Christians. It was not primarily by holding a doctrine, enjoining a rule of practice, or celebrating peculiar rites, that they distinguished themselves, and were distinguished by others; it was by naming the name of Christ, and following Him.

These Christians retained their designation, and adhered to Christ, in the midst of intense and inhuman hatred. So obnoxious were they to the inhabitants of Rome, that it was advantageous to Nero to put them to death, on a notoriously false accusation, in a manner so diabolically cruel that it would have excited indignation if exercised against the most destructive beasts of prey, or the most repulsive and pernicious vermin.

The Person, named Christ, after whom these Christians called themselves, must, therefore, be concluded to have stamped upon them His influence with tremendous potency and vivid distinctness.

For the rise of this new power on earth, the power, namely, proceeding from Christ, Tacitus affords us a definite, strictly-limited, chronological place in history. Nero's persecution of the Christians took place in the sixty-fourth and sixty-fifth years of our era. The execution of Christ by Pilate, as recorded by Tacitus, occurred about thirty-five years previously. This Christ, who was honored in Rome in a manner so transcendent; in a manner which, on the showing of

Tacitus, resembled the honor paid to a God, had lived only so long before. Whatever time is required to account for the phenomenon of Christ-worship, on such a scale and with such intensity, is rigidly confined within thirty-five years. If legend was accumulated; if incident was exaggerated; if fable was invented; if a real individual was invested with a garment of myth; if the popular imagination surrounded him with a halo and magnified Him into a Divinity; if enthusiasm contributed its colored fancies, fanaticism its distempered heat, and superstition its darker imagery,—the whole work had to be done in little more than the number of years which now, in 1862, have elapsed since the death of Walter Scott.

Keeping these points well in view, let us see whether they will not lead us on to several important deductions.

In an age of penny newspapers, I premise, of circulating libraries, and of universal reading, we are apt to forget what a remarkable instrument the human memory really is. More than two thousand years ago, Plato expressed the apprehension that a habit of receiving assistance from,

and trusting to, written books, might enfeeble the mind. His remark is valuable as involving an expression of opinion by one who had, perhaps, heard the entire Iliad repeated by a rhapsodist, to effect that the powers of the human mind, deprived of all literary aids, are well fitted for thought and recollection. Numerous illustrations will occur to the reader, casting light and countenance on Plato's observation. Italian story-tellers repeat long scrolls of their country's poetry. The ballads of a people descend, as the minstrelsy of Scotland descended, in substantial correctness, generation after generation. A Dasesent, inquiring into the tales of Norway, and comparing them with similar tales elsewhere, finds that the popular memory, acting in branches of related kindreds parted for a thousand years, retains circumstances and occurrences with such minuteness that the identity of a tale which has crossed the Himalaya and Ural mountains, skirted the icy solitudes of the north, and arrived finally in the green valleys of England, can be distinctly traced. When the human mind is conscious that a prized treasure is confided to its sole custody, — when memory is its own book, — the charac-

ters are clearly impressed, and the clasps which bind the whole are strong as iron.

A small work, recently published by an able minister in the north of Scotland, furnishes an illustration in point. It purports to be an account of the most remarkable preachers in Ross-shire during the last century and the commencement of the present. Many of the men described had been dead sixty or eighty years. But passages from their sermons, notes of their conversation, incidents in their lives, clung to the popular recollection. Handed from father to son, the very words they spoke survived; and we find that, by simply transferring to his page the popular reminiscences concerning them, the author has preserved, for us several well-marked and indubitably accurate portraits.¹

Now, the Person after whom the vast multitude in Rome called themselves — the Person for whose sake they endured contempt, detestation, ferocious cruelty — the Person whose influence had extended, not through a district or a parish, but from the remotest outskirt of Rome's domin-

¹ *The Fathers of Ross-shire.* By Rev. John Kennedy.

ion to the capital of the empire — had, I repeat, been dead considerably less than forty years.

May we infer anything with certainty, from the statement of Tacitus, as to what Christ had been?

The Christians were, Tacitus informs us, a sect. They held a particular religion, or, as he calls it, a superstition. The "Author of the sect" was Christ. Knowing the state of society in Judea at the time when, as Tacitus declares, Christ lived and died in that country, we can easily and confidently form an idea of the manner in which the sect of Christians was called into existence. The popular instruction of the age was almost exclusively oral. Having no periodical literature, and almost no books, the popular mind, burning with the unslaked thirst for knowledge, turned eagerly to whatever sage, prophet, or other teacher held out promise of light. Christ had been some instructor of this kind, true or false. Gibbon, in fact, assumes that He was a "teacher," seer, or magician. And as the sect took His name, found in His name their definite and comprehensive characterization, and shrank from no suffering for His sake, it is absolutely

certain they would seek to know as much of Him as possible, and would do their best to retain the memory of His words and sayings.

What advantages had they for attaining this object? Let the answer be solemnly and earnestly weighed. Every man who had passed the age of thirty-five when Nero was putting to death that "vast multitude" of Christians, *had been a contemporary of Christ*. This, too, in an age when memory was in all its freshness, and when thirty-five years stood for a far shorter period in the chronology of mind than in our hurrying, excited, changeful days. The Christian Church, in the capital of the empire, would, besides, be a church of some note; and any one who had seen and heard Christ would be honored and listened to by its members. The Jews were a wandering people, and there might be causes urging men who had mingled in the audiences of Christ to quit Judea. It can scarcely be conceived possible, therefore, that there were not, among the Christians of Rome to whom in Nero's time Christ was dearer than life, certain, if not many, who had seen and heard Him. But the fact that a vast multitude believed in Christ,

in Rome, in Nero's time, demonstrates that multitudes believed on Him in other parts of the empire; and the intensity of Christian faith in Rome would be no more than a fair test of its intensity in other places, including Judea. In brief, the words and deeds of Christ were of infinite concern to multitudes in the land of His activity, and in the centre of the intelligence of the world, while millions of His contemporaries were alive.

Imagination is a powerful faculty; but in this case it was curbed by stern restraints. The recollection of any man, who had impressed his contemporaries as the Christ of Tacitus palpably had impressed His, would be keen and vivid in the popular mind for at least a hundred years. It would be so in our own time, and we can scarcely conceive how much more likely it was to be so at the commencement of our era. The crystals of memory would for such a period continue angular in their forms, brilliantly vivid in their tints.

Say not vaguely that these Christians held it as a first duty to honor Christ, and that the play of imagination would be sanctioned and promoted

by reverence. Before reverence for Christ could urge men to build Him a temple of allegory, before the feeling was created which sets imagination to her airy work, the executed malefactor of Tacitus had to be transformed into an object of unmeasured esteem, of infinite veneration. Men do not construct myths in honor of known malefactors; and thirty-five years after Christ died as a malefactor, "a vast multitude" of men called themselves by His name, and died for His sake, in Rome.

It is now recognized by strong thinkers that imagination and the allegorizing faculty could do little towards such a result. It is no special tendency of mankind to regard the universe as a "lyrical drama," or to take the belief which rules intellect and moulds character from "a witty allegory or a graceful lie." No. "Think," asks one who has never fairly pressed his question to its issue in relation to Christianity, "would *we* believe, and take with us as our life guidance, an allegory, a poetic sport? Not sport, but earnest, is what we should require. . . . It seems to me a radical perversion, and even *inversion* of the business, to put that forward as the origin and

moving cause," which "was rather the result and termination. To get beautiful allegories, a perfect poetic symbol, was not the want of men; but to know what they were to believe about this universe, what course they were to steer in it, what in this mysterious life of theirs they had to hope and to fear, to do and to forbear doing. The Pilgrim's Progress is an allegory, and a beautiful, just, and serious one; but consider whether Bunyan's allegory could have *preceded* the faith it symbolized! The faith had to be already there, standing believed by everybody. . . . Men, I say, never did believe idle songs, never risked their soul's life in allegories."¹ It was a serious matter for a Christian in the time of Nero to have made a mistake about Christ. Unless the crucified malefactor was what Christians at this day believe Him to have been, death by burning in the form of a torch at a public game would have been a terrific misfortune. Man's sovereign passion, the passion for truth, would in such circumstances come into play. What Christ *said* and *did* would be of more practical and earnest interest than a pretty or pathetic tale con-

¹ Thomas Carlyle.

cerning Him. And if the Christian, who was to seal his profession in a death of studied torments, preferred truth touching Christ to fancy, there were thousands, there were hundreds of thousands, of Christ's contemporaries alive to whom reference might be made.

We now leave Tacitus. Turning to those Christians of whom he spoke, we find, at the earliest period when their own voice becomes audible in history, that they have four records of the life of Christ to which they attach supreme importance. These are the Evangelical narratives we now possess. They are referred to by the early Christians as containing, in pure and authentic form, what they know of Christ. When we open them we discover that they are exactly such accounts of the Saviour as we should have expected Christians in the position of those mentioned by Tacitus to possess of the Founder of their religion. So long as the contemporaries of Christ were numerous, and those who personally knew Him were frequently met with, the Christians of an age accustomed to oral instruction would seek nothing more than the concurrent statements of disciples of the Lord

and His earliest followers. But when the ranks of Christ's contemporaries had been thinned by death, the words and facts on which Christian faith and hope depended would be committed to manuscript and carefully preserved. Precisely at such a time did the Gospel narratives arise, and they are manifestly and literally a transference to manuscript of such words and facts from Christ's life as we must conclude the Christians of Tacitus to have known. They are collections of sayings, discourses, and occurrences, which could not have been heard and seen without leaving a vivid impression on the memory; and they are preserved with the amber-like clearness and crystalline decision with which the mind in an unreading age retains intense impressions. One of the four, — our fourth Gospel, — while substantially corroborating the others, is characterized by a spiritual apprehension of Christ which may not have been attained by the common run of His auditors. But the three first Gospels, commonly called the synoptical, consist precisely of what the multitude of Christ's hearers would carry away. There are speeches, such as the Sermon on the Mount: there are particu-

lar parables, as of the sower and the seed ; there are accounts of miracles, as of the feeding of five thousand, besides women and children, with a few loaves and fishes ; there are striking occurrences, connected with particular words of Christ, such as the arrival of John's messengers to inquire as to His Messiahship, and His express, deliberate, detailed assertion of miraculous power in reply. These things are manifestly what memory, in an age like that in which Christ taught, could not fail to seize. Christ committed nothing to manuscript, but those parables, radiant with beauty, those thoughts penetrating to the heart's heart of every subject, those flashes of moral insight which light up the soul's inmost caverns with the candle of God, were an ineffaceable writing traced upon the memory of His generation. In Evangelist after Evangelist those things recur. There is just enough of diversity to obviate all idea of collusion ; there is that manifest identity which proves the impression, though made on many minds, to have been so well-marked and profound, that any play of imagination about its keen edges was impossible. The authors of two of the Gospel accounts,

the early Christians inform us, were disciples of the Lord, ear-witnesses of His words, eye-witnesses of His deeds; the authors of the remaining two were companions of disciples and of eye and ear witnesses. There is no reason conceivable that this should be false, and the circumstances of the case render it inconceivable that it should not be true. We know from Tacitus that "a vast multitude" of Christians were enduring hatred and massacre for Christ's sake, while hundreds of thousands of His contemporaries were alive; and it is incredible that the persecuted should have let His contemporaries die out without having from them, in an enduring form, what they knew of Him after whom they called themselves Christians.

The oral instruction, which was the New Testament of the earliest Christians, committed to writing by those who knew it best, — the words and facts which fed the souls of those who, in Nero's time, were ready to die for Christ, garnered for their children and survivors by those who had companied with the Lord, — such is the first literature which we should have expected Christians to possess; and such the Gospels are.

It is an exhibition of mental confusion or culpable ignorance to launch forth into expressions of vague admiration in reference to their style and diction. Their literary qualities, strictly so called, are of no pre-eminent order. They possess, indeed, one quality which, in literature as in life, is the basis of all excellence, — self-evident, unflinching truthfulness. But they bear no trace either of wish or of ability to enhance the interest or impressiveness of what is related by the manner of relating it. Their authors have not thought of literary composition at all. They have not trained themselves to arrange their recollections in sequence of time or place. They feel only the unspeakable moment of what they have to relate, and their sole aim is to commit it intelligibly to manuscript. The fact that Jesus did this or said that is with them of such transcendent importance that the question, when or where he spoke or acted, is, comparatively speaking, overlooked. Absolute certainty, absolute accuracy, perfect distinctness, in putting down the syllable uttered, the deed done, by Christ, — that is their grand, absorbing aim. Thirty years of His life may be all but a blank; they offer no conjecture to fill

up the gap. Certain of His sayings may give offence, certain of His doings may appear mysterious. No matter. Their eyes saw them, their ears heard them, and they put them down. They do not write about Christ, they do not purposely draw the portrait, or describe the character, of Christ; they transcribe from their memory what is vividly, indelibly imprinted there *of* Christ. Their connecting narrative is the gold of simplicity, earnestness, integrity; but set in it, quite distinct from it, are the pearls and rubies of Christ's words and actions; and it is as we contemplate these that His image comes together, that His likeness dawns out upon us, that we are aware of a majestic, marvellous, God-like Personality, compared with whom all other historical characters flit swiftly back into insignificance.

Plainly this is, in a strictly historical point of view, the most veracious account of one said to have been seen and known which the human mind can conceive. A formal delineation of character may be from the imagination; a homogeneous narrative, of equal excellence and peculiarity in every part, may be, from first to last, the product of ingenuity and invention: but if

the character is presented by mere statement of fragmentary recollections, and if these fragments are of an altogether different quality and order from the narrative in which they appear, the conclusion that they were derived from a living Person is inevitable. The Evangelists write as truth-loving, plain-minded, ordinary men; they give us no gleams of insight into nature's beauty, no apt and beautiful parables, no profound and far-reaching truths: but once Jesus opens His lips, the page is illumined with colors of fairest poetry, enlivened with most exquisite apologue, radiant with keenest truth; the lilies of the field beam out in a beauty eternally fresh; the companies of virgins, wise and foolish, advance with their lamps; or Dives and Lazarus link heaven, earth, and hell together in their profoundest relations, in one or two magnificent strokes of dramatic imagery, — and truths which, after thousands of years, are the guiding stars of spiritual civilization, break upon the intellectual vision.

We can now understand the extraordinary phenomenon of a vast multitude in Rome calling themselves by the name of One who had been executed as a malefactor between thirty and forty

years before, and being ready to die for Him. We find, as we should have expected, that His personality had impressed itself indelibly upon their minds; and that they had ample and accurate information concerning Him. There were, we have seen, among them large numbers of Christ's contemporaries. The men who had been His disciples would be their chief authorities regarding Him. These, when they came to commit their recollections to writing, would know that there were thousands living who had seen and heard Him, and who could confirm or expose their statements. From the writings we can represent distinctly to ourselves the kind of teaching in relation to Christ to which the Christians of the Neronian persecution listened; and, from a consideration of their circumstances, as narrated by Tacitus, we can pronounce the writings exactly such as they were likely, so soon as they felt writing on the subject to be necessary, to possess.

It is scarcely necessary to observe that a long array of arguments, independent of any I have hinted at, might be brought forward to prove the historical character of the evangelical memoirs.

The whole question might, for instance, be rested upon the absolute impossibility that the Christ of the Gospels should have been the product either of individual invention or of popular imagination; that such a portrait should have originated in anything but reality. I content myself with claiming from every reasonable mind the concession that the words and acts of Christ, imprinted on the evangelical narratives, are irrefragably historical.

What, then, is Christ's testimony to His own religion? What, in brief, is the proof He offers that it is Divine?

We have its compendious statement in His own words. John Baptist had been thrown into prison. Naturally perplexed at such an interruption of his ministry, and probably expecting an intervention by Jesus on his behalf, he sent messengers to Christ, to ask, point-blank, whether He was the Messiah or not. Jesus answered, "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them: and

blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." These words are distinct and explicit. They are related with close coincidence by Matthew and Luke; the occurrence which called them forth is likely to have happened; they exactly suit its circumstances; and they are such as could not fail to have impressed themselves on the minds of hearers. We may be as sure of their having been uttered by Christ as if our ears had heard them.

Two things are broadly discriminated in this statement by Christ of the evidence that He was the Messiah of God: first, possession of miraculous power; second, proclamation of good tidings to the poor. In other words, He claimed Divine authority, because armed with Divine power, and preaching a gospel of Divine mercy and holiness.

It will be necessary for us briefly but carefully to consider these two in their relation to each other. The truth concerning Christ's miracles, as taught, practically in deed and expressly in word, by Himself, is not to be clearly and fully apprehended at a first hasty glance. It is a truth whose line is traced with Divine precision by the finger of the Saviour between the falsehood of

two opposing extremes: that of the power-worshippers, on the one hand, and that of the power-despisers, on the other; that of those who view miracles as the sole attestation of Christ's mission, and that of those who extenuate their evidential force and pronounce them mere teaching by example. This is the day of flying judgments and half-truths, and we must exercise patience and circumspection if we would gather up from the Gospels all that Christ taught on this matter.

It is certain, first of all, that Christ never spoke of miraculous power as a *mechanical, sensible test*, by which He was prepared to *extort* belief in His mission. The devil is stated to have asked Him to perform a miracle, confiding in His Divinity; the Jews demanded a sign that He was the Son of God; in both cases He refused compliance. "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given it." "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."

It is, in the second place, equally certain that Christ expressly, deliberately, consciously asserted His possession of miraculous powers. This fact is undeniable as it is important. We saw that

both Jewish and Pagan opponents of Christianity had heard of Christ as one laying claim to supernatural power. The Gospels represent Him on every page as exercising such power. Miracles are no brilliant embroidery wrought on the plain web of the evangelical narrative; they pervade it, warp and woof. There is miracle at Christ's birth and at His baptism; He commences His ministry with miracle; we hear of multitudes bringing sick and maimed to Him, and having them healed; He repeatedly raises the dead; He again and again feeds large numbers by preternatural provision, and refers in express terms to this form of miraculous exertion; He dies amid the sublime terrors of miracle; and He rises miraculously into the sky when returning into heaven. We have just quoted from His own lips the declaration that He raised the dead. If anything is known of Christ at all, it is known that He broadly and distinctly *asserted* His possession of miraculous power.

It is, in the third place, beyond question that Christ attached a *strictly evidential* character to His miraculous works. The sceptre of God's creative power is not so holy or so august as

the word of His mouth; but it is sacred and august, and it can be borne only in the hand to which God commits it. Christ referred to His mighty works as aggravating the guilt of the cities which rejected, and the men who reviled Him. He did more. He solemnly declared those works to be God's testimony in His behalf: "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." In one word, the miracles of Christ were manifestations of that creative power by which God has from time to time suspended the law of nature, "in regard," as Bacon grandly says, "of the work of redemption, which is the greater, and whereto all God's signs and miracles do refer."

Considering all this, is not the loose talk of certain sentimental apologists for Christianity on the subject of miracles deeply surprising? "Loose talk," rather than positive error, but marvellously obliterative of the exquisitely-defined lines of truth in reference to miracle traced by the hand of Christ. "*Any conversion,*" writes one, "*or adhesion to His cause, which rested rather on the impression produced by superhuman power than on the acceptance of the truth*

in the heart, was studiously repelled by our Lord Himself." Mark how the tender precision of Christ's statement of truth in regard to miracle is blurred by this sweeping assertion. He would no doubt have deemed it nobler, higher, more Christian in Thomas to believe without ocular and tactual demonstration; but was Thomas "studiously repelled?" Did Christ repel the Jews when He bid them believe, if for nothing else, "for the very works' sake?" And what are we to say of "studious repulsion" in such a case when we find Christ directing the messengers of him who had been His forerunner to tell John that "the blind received their sight, the lame walked, the lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard," as well as that "to the poor the gospel was preached?" Christ never repelled any sincere adherent, whatever the means of his conversion. He blamed no one for attaching infinite importance to His mighty works. He repelled only the blasphemy of superseding spiritual power by material, or the malice of demanding a sign, not in order to obtain conviction for a candid judgment, but in order to entrap Him who was addressed.

There are men, plainly enough, who would have suggested some modification of Christ's message to John Baptist. Their intellectual and moral condition is too sublimated to brook the coarse machinery of miracle. It irks them to have to mention things like raising the dead and creating food for multitudes to ears scientific. Christ, however, conjoined the spiritual and the material evidence of His mission; and what Christ joined together Christians ought not to put asunder. Nay, may there not be some to whom it is cause for inexpressible gratitude that the miraculous evidence of Christianity has been joined with the spiritual; that a Power has been revealed independent of physical law; that through nature's mysterious music has pierced the still, small, mighty voice of God? Had nature been forever the same, and had there been only nature,—no change from season to season, from age to age, from æon to æon; the autumn wind sounding, the thunder booming, ocean rolling and roaring forever,—would not the fingers of the Most High have seemed to stiffen and draw back from the harp of nature; would not the eternal monotone have become oppressive and overpowering;

and would it not have passed, at last, into a long, low wail of despair, — moaning, eternally, that there is no God? There may be those of spirit so exalted and faith so strong that a moral lesson would have satisfied them that Christ spake from God; but there are others who will rejoice that He suited His proofs of His Divine mission to John in prison, and to Thomas after the darkness of Calvary had shadowed his soul.

Be this as it may, the fact is historically indubitable that Jesus Christ *said* that He raised the dead, as well as preached a gospel of celestial healing to the poor. The assertion makes a large demand upon our faith. Let us inquire whether its falsity or incorrectness would or would not be a greater miracle than its literal accuracy.

CHAPTER IV.

THE POSSIBLE HYPOTHESES CONCERNING CHRIST'S TESTIMONY TO HIS OWN RELIGION.

It is my hope to be able to show in these chapters that Christianity must be true; that the particular evidence adduced in its favor not only annihilates every theory hitherto proposed against it, but makes any tenable theory on that side inconceivable, thus absolutely shutting up the candid mind to accept it. I can, with more or less effort, realize the state of mind which takes exception to other parts of the argument for Christianity; but I am incapable of imagining any man impartially, comprehensively, and calmly weighing Christ's historical attestation to His Divine mission, and concluding it to be unsatisfactory. Under these circumstances, I am sincerely desirous that the case of the skeptic should be stated with all possible advantage to him. Skepticism has, within the last eighty years, changed its ground; but it is no necessary consequence that

the position it now occupies should be weaker than the old. It would insult the intelligence and education of the time, infidel as well as Christian, to entertain the hypothesis of the Paine school, that Jesus was a vulgar impostor, a mere selfish deceiver, or crazy enthusiast. But no department of literature has been cultivated in the last half century with more signal effect than that which is devoted to the delineation of human beings acting under peculiar circumstances, and endowed with peculiar characters. The rude and hasty theories which found in Cromwell a designing hypocrite, and in Mohammed a greedy, hypochondriacal, harebrained quack, have given way before finer analyses of character. The shades by which deception and self-deception, fanaticism and roguery, enthusiasm and craft, superstition and scoundrelism, melt into each other, — shades as subtle as those by which a great painter blends his tints, — have revealed themselves to a more exquisite observation. A Cagliostro and Joe Smith, believed in by thousands, and probably believing, to some extent, in themselves; a Robespierre, possessed, beyond all doubt, with a martyr-like devotion to the cause

he believed to be true and beneficent, and led by it to the armpits in blood; effects of imagination, phantasy, and intense excitement on the bodily frame, previously unsuspected; phenomena of animal magnetism and the power exerted by one human individuality over another, unknown in former times: these, and things like these, have prepared us for more mysterious developments of human character and personal influence than were dreamed of by our fathers. Discussions of the character of Christ, and of possible hypotheses of the origin of Christianity, like those of Paley, consummately able as they are, have ceased to be satisfactory, or at least exhaustive. It is time to inquire whether some species of delusion or deception too subtle for Paley's analysis, — some well-intentioned weakness, some freak of religious enthusiasm, some refinement of pious fraud, — was not, after all, the originating cause of Christianity, and gives the key to the character and history of Christ; or whether, with all our knowledge of history and of the human heart, with our complete knowledge of biography, and in the full blaze of science, we are still shut up to the conclusion that, as sure as man is man and

truth is truth, Jesus of Nazareth was what he called himself.

Every hypothesis that Christ was not the Messiah sent from God must admit of being classed under one of three heads, — imposture, delusion, or a mixture of the two. I shall endeavor to draw out a theory accounting for Christ's testimony, such as might be more or less vaguely realized by the cultivated skepticism of the present day.

A Jewish peasant is born in the reign of Tiberius, of pious, simple-minded, somewhat superstitious parents. The period is that at which the night of Roman despotism is settling over Judea; but old prophecies have taught the people to look for a deliverer to arise, like the God-sent heroes of old, scattering the darkness from the brow of Israel, replacing the garment of sackcloth with the purple of empire, and making Zion the crown and the glory of the world. The family into which the child is born traces its origin to the house of David, and nourishes in obscurity a pride becoming the heirs of kings. The child's mother, a tender-minded enthusiast, has dreams and fancies about the time of his birth. He is

called Jesus on account of some imaginary portent. He is of a meditative, dreamy, enthusiastic disposition, with considerable intellectual capacity, and high religious impressibility. His mother's hints, the circumstances of his country, the rumors of prophecy about to be fulfilled, encompass him, from his earliest years, with an atmosphere of emotional and imaginative excitement. He develops the strength and intensity of character which have often belonged to enthusiasts. Those about him feel the spell of his intensity, and the maniac quails before his glowing and steadfast eye. He acquires, by instruction or observation, some simple knowledge of medicine; he travels into Egypt, and sounds the deeps of necromancy. His kinsman John, a more demonstrative, fiery, but far less profound nature, arrives at the belief that there is something mysterious and great about him. His mother had long since cherished the same idea. John begins to preach and baptize, and impresses powerfully upon the imagination of Jesus that he is an extraordinary personage, by publicly announcing the fact to the people. Gradually the belief is fixed in his mind that he is the Messiah. He begins to preach. His pre-

scriptions to sick folks he finds accepted as miraculous formulas, and epileptic or maniacal patients are calmed and quelled by his glance. A persuasion of his superhuman power enhances the popular effect of his teachings, and he is not careful to counteract the impression. Gradually he admits the belief that miraculous gifts are committed to him, and is himself as ready to be deluded as the crowd. He cannot now relinquish the claim to supernatural power without losing credit. A subtle element of deceit mingles with his delusion. He winks at trickery got up by disciples or friends. His spoken instructions retain meanwhile a high moral tone, and his imaginative genius clothes his utterances in a fascinating garb of parable and poetry. He is popular with the commonalty, but does not move the influential portions of society, and is too acute not to perceive that, under these circumstances, he would have no chance in a contest with Rome. The opposition of the magnates of the nation at last triumphs over him, and he dies on the cross.

This, or something like this, is the theory by which most rejecters of Christianity in the pres-

ent day explain to themselves the extant records of Christ's career. It may be possible to construct the hypothesis more plausibly, and I invite skeptics to put their ingenuity to the strain on the subject. The gist of all such theories must be, that Christ was a singular, perhaps unexampled type of the moral enthusiast; that he deceived himself as well as others; that, when consciously deceitful, the fraud was pious; and that, after all deductions are made on account of what his age, nation, and circumstances led him into, he will remain worthy of respect and admiration.

The way to test the truth of this or any similar hypothesis will be by full and candid analysis of the moral and intellectual character of Christ.

CHAPTER V.

WAS CHRIST'S TESTIMONY FALSE?—HIS MORAL CHARACTER.

It has been shown that Christ explicitly and consciously declared Himself possessed of supernatural power. That power embraced walking upon the sea, stilling the tempest, feeding companies of four and of five thousand with a few loaves and fishes, and raising the dead. I proceed to inquire whether, from the moral character of Christ, it would, or would not, have been a greater miracle than these that, in asserting Himself to wield creative power, He *lied*.

It is, first of all, a remarkable circumstance, touching the moral character of Christ, that the testimony of thoughtful and earnest men, for nearly two thousand years, may be pronounced unanimous in its favor. The effect of the appearance of Christ in the world has been to impress mankind with an idea of transcendent

purity. "Which of you," said Christ to those who opposed Him in Judea, "convinceth me of sin?" They were dumb. The question was put nearly two thousand years ago, and the response is yet awaited. Skeptic after skeptic has glared into the character of Christ, searching for a flaw; and skeptic after skeptic has recoiled with the confession that, whatever Christianity might be, this Jesus of Nazareth was honest and pure. No character known to history has been subjected to scrutiny so piercing as that of Jesus Christ; and there is no character known to history, except His, of which moral perfection could for a moment be maintained. The proudest names in the annals of philosophic morality are tarnished. Zeno preached a stoical virtue; Diogenes was cynically fierce against sham; but Zeno and Diogenes were personally immoral. Socrates is the loftiest and purest name of antiquity; but suspicions have in all ages been entertained in reference to the personal morals of Socrates, of a kind which never, even in imagination, darkened the figure of Christ. Aristotle and Plato were high-minded, in some sense spiritually-minded, men; but who does not know that if

Plato and Aristotle were our moral guides, we should recede at once to something like a Mormon standard? Cato the elder was one of the most respectable of Roman moralists, but he rose not above the cast-iron type of Roman virtue. His goodness was a narrow, intense, implacable patriotism. His celebrated demand for the destruction of Carthage was inhumanly, fiendishly cruel, and his treatment of his slaves that of a man whose heart was stone. The best thing I ever heard of him is related by Horace, — *mero caluisse virtutem*, — that the repulsive old savage mellowed his virtue with wine. Mohammed was a sincere reformer; but the highest that can be said of him is, that in certain points he aimed at the Christian model, while in others he fell infinitely beneath it. The veneration with which several generations have regarded Luther and Calvin is profound; but what Protestant would declare the character of either to have been flawless? Space does not permit me to illustrate this point further, nor can it be considered necessary that I should do so. It is beyond doubt that no being has yet appeared in human form whom the suffrage of the race has

pronounced so pure, so holy, as Jesus Christ. A beam of white radiance, pure as the light of God's throne, proceeds from His eye, falling along all succeeding ages. May we not ask whether men could have recognized this ray as so pure if there had mingled in it originally an emanation from the spirit of evil—a conscious deception, a lie? Every record, sacred and profane, which we have of this Jesus, declares Him to have *said* that He could raise the dead.

It is of high practical importance to observe that there has been, in recent times, no change in the estimate formed of the character of Christ by earnest, thinking men, even though they have not accepted Him as God's Messiah.

“If the life and death of Socrates,” said Rousseau, “were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God.” “The morality of the gospel,” said the same writer again, “and its general tone, were beyond the conception of the Jewish authors; and the history of Jesus Christ has marks of truth so palpable, so striking, and so perfectly inimitable, that its inventor would excite our admiration more than its hero.”

With this has agreed the opinion of the greatest of those contemporary or almost contemporary thinkers who, if I must not call them infidel, would not permit me to call them Christian. Fichte, the noblest representative of recent pantheistic speculation in Germany, a man of superb intellectual vigor and impassioned devotion to truth and purity, bore Christ the highest testimony which it is possible for a German metaphysician to bear to any one — namely, pronounced Him an unconscious promulgator of the Fichtean philosophy. Jesus Christ, according to Fichte, was carried, by the mere purity and elevation of His character, into that region of transcendental and eternal morality to which a few other minds have risen only after long philosophic study and musing. He, a Jewish peasant, did, besides, says Fichte, more than all the philosophers in bringing heavenly morality into the hearts and homes of common men. The philosophers had sects and coteries; His followers were nations and generations. Fichte had that marvellous strength of wing in the open sky of speculation which characterizes the Germans; but his power was by no means so great

in walking along the common earth and investigating plain facts. Had his practical capacity equalled his speculative power, he must have been brought to a dead halt by the question, How this Jesus, whose stainless moral character made Him the representative of purified humanity, could have falsely asserted that He had raised the dead, and fed five thousand on some morsels of bread and fish? Had Fichte fairly confronted this question, he might have passed beyond mere admiration for Christ's moral character to the exclamation, "My Lord and my God!"

Goethe was the universal genius of modern Germany, and is believed by many to have been the greatest man who has appeared in Europe for several centuries. He calls Christ "the Divine Man," "the Holy One," and represents Him as the pattern, example, and model of humanity.

No thinker of the first order, since Goethe, has dissented from his estimate of Christ's moral character. Mr. Carlyle, his great follower in England, has always referred in terms of profound reverence to Christ. The life of the Saviour is in his view a "perfect ideal Poem." "The greatest

of all heroes," he says, "is One whom we do not name here! Let sacred silence meditate that sacred matter." Deliberate lying on the part of Christ he would reject as a monstrous and inconceivable hypothesis.

Yet the only Christ known to history broadly, constantly, deliberately, asserted His power to heal the sick, cure the blind, raise the dead. If He did not *say* that He possessed this power, we may shut up the volume of history, since it can certify *no* fact; if He said it, can we imagine Him to have said it falsely? If He said it truly, was He not, and *is* He not, the Son of God?

But, after all, the most important attestation to the moral excellence of Christ is to be found in the portrait of Him presented in the evangelical histories.

It is, as we saw, a portrait artlessly drawn, with no parade of applausive adjective, no elaboration of exalting color. It is not a formal portrait at all. The disciples put down Christ's words as they remember them, His deeds as they witnessed them, and the result is the Jesus of the New Testament. What, then, do we find in the

Christ of the New Testament? I shall touch briefly upon the Gospel delineation, leaving readers to follow out the subject for themselves.

Christ's entire conception of His Messiahship, in the first place, is that of a moral and spiritual, not a material, work. There was nothing in the circumstances of His time or nation to lead Him to this. The prevalent religious ideas were formal and external, and the subjection of the Jews to the Romans tended to throw into prominence the idea that the expected deliverer would be, like the old deliverers of the people, a man of war. But whatever Christ's hopes or intentions were, it is plain that He rested all upon *moral* renovation. The Sermon on the Mount, indubitably historical, places this forever beyond doubt. Through the innumerable obstructions and obscurations of the time, He penetrated to the central and eternal truth—that healing for a nation can only be of the soul, the conscience, the character. Take away the moral element of Christ's teaching, and what remains? The whole has vanished. False religions turn entirely on ceremonies and performances; His was spirit and truth—these and nothing else. The sacraments

of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, apart from their moral significance, could attract no imagination. Can we conceive a teacher, whose doctrine was thus profoundly and pervasively moral, binding it up with a falsehood? The Jews looked for signs and wonders: true; but Christ confronted prejudices and prepossessions of the nation every whit as powerful as this, and why should He give way here alone? Miracles increased the power of His preaching: doubtless; but He could rebuke the vague longing to see a sign. If ever there was a teacher who would have dispensed with miracles *unless they were true*, that teacher was Christ Jesus.

In the second place, a distinctive characteristic of Christ's teaching is its insistence on sincerity. His words go always direct to the heart. The external action was to Him but a sign. The chastity He requires is of the eye and the soul; He reads the guilt of adultery in a glance. The love He values is not what cries Lord, Lord, but what wells from the secret places of the heart. The benevolence He extols is of the widow's mite, not of the trumpeted donation. Other teachers have smoothed all difficulties for prose-

lytes, and have been severe upon sinners who were not among their own followers; Christ sent back the plausible mammon-worshipper who offered Him allegiance, with a requirement, stern indeed, but no more than testing: — “Sell all thou hast.” Thy words are unexceptionable; thy intentions seem good; thy conscience accuses thee of no tolerated sin: “Sell all thou hast.” Had the man’s *heart* been *right*, he would have done it. But falsehood, of whose presence he appears to have lost consciousness, was lurking beneath all his plausibilities, and Christ went straight to *that*. The woman taken in adultery, on the other hand, He does not condemn. He sees only the foul hearts and sanctimonious faces of those who accuse her, and flashing the torch of conscience upon each, He sends them back in convicted dismay.

But why should the vain attempt be made to catalogue perfection, or to name the virtues of Him in whom all virtues met? Of ~~what~~ moral excellence was he not a type? Surrounded by bitter enemies, He wept that they would not let Him fold them under the wings of his love. Alone in the world — solitary in working out a

mighty purpose, and in bearing an unspeakable sorrow — separated, even humanly speaking, by thousands of years, from sympathy and understanding — He never faltered in His patience, He never wavered in His long-suffering, He never flinched in His Divine fortitude. While none understood Him, He perfectly understood all, He made allowance for all. Anger He felt, but it was visibly the anger of a God, the scorching flash of Divine holiness upon sin; anger for unkindness, for carelessness, for disrespect, to Himself, never. When the traitor was coming with his band, and those who should have guarded Him were asleep, there was no sterner rebuke than "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" When Judas was already at hand, it was only, "Sleep on now, and take your rest." To love God supremely, to love one's neighbor as one's self, — this was the rule He prescribed to His disciples, and His life was its absolute fulfilment. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" such was the testimony of God concerning Him. "He hath done all things well;" such was the fond and wondering attestation by men that they could require no more of Him.

No vice that has a name can be thought of in connection with Jesus Christ. Ingenious malignity looks in vain for the faintest trace of self-seeking in His motives; sensuality shrinks abashed from His celestial purity; falsehood can leave no stain on Him who is incarnate truth; injustice is forgotten beside His errorless equity; the very possibility of avarice is swallowed up in His benignity and love; the very idea of ambition is lost in His Divine wisdom and Divine self-abnegation.

And yet this Jesus, who defines the devil as "a liar," who has the clearest consciousness that a lie is the very essence of evil, tells the Jews that God the Father witnesses for Him, the form of that witness being the mighty works done by Him.

Were those mighty works a deception? Did the words in which Christ searched into motive and pierced the subtlest hypocrisy go like daggers through His own heart? That is the question. There is no evading it. History has heard of no Christ who was not a miracle-worker. Jews and disciples, Christians and infidels, Matthew and Luke, Celsus and Julian, all know

Christ as one who constantly, and for years, declared Himself able to raise the dead. Can human conception embrace the very thought that He was lying? No. The conscience and the intellect of the race start back appalled at the imagination of a miracle so stupendous. The crushing of all the stars into powder in one grasp of God's hand would not be such a miracle.

Was He, then, mistaken? The answer involves analysis of His intellectual character. That analysis will form the principal part of our subject, — principal, not in importance, but in having been less fully performed than analysis of His moral character. The intellect of Christ — considered merely as that of a man — I regard as the most marvellous known to history.

CHAPTER VI.

WAS CHRIST'S TESTIMONY MISTAKEN? — HIS INTELLECTUAL CHARACTER.

BE it granted that the influence of religious enthusiasm is strange and subtle, and that most religious impostors have been self-deceived. Cagliostro, though decidedly a scoundrel and quack, had probably a confused, dreamy, superstitious notion that he did, or at least might, possess superhuman powers. The Mormon prophet, though the hypothesis of crafty knave dovetails remarkably into his history, may have been bewildered by the success of his own schemes, and the reverence of devotees, into a kind of conviction that he could do mighty works. But it hardly admits of doubt that both these were deliberately and consciously dishonest. It is a notable fact that honest and manly characters, though inflamed in the highest degree with religious enthusiasm, have *not* been betrayed into

the fancy that they possessed miraculous power. Mohammed lived in a barbarous age, among a barbarous people, and announced himself as the prophet of God, commissioned to overturn the religious institutions of his nation. He was a vehement enthusiast; his imagination luxuriated in descriptions of the bliss of Paradise; his words, compared with those of Christ, are as the wild flashings of a torch to the serene and steady burning of a lamp. But Mohammed was never deluded into the belief that he could work miracles. He expressly declared that he could not. A striking illustration of the fact on which I insist is furnished by the biography of Edward Irving. His mind was violently heated by enthusiasm. He believed implicitly in the visions and revelations of the enthusiasts by whom he was surrounded. But he was an upright man. Even in his aberrations he was a powerfully-minded man. The result was, that, while wondering that privileges were not vouchsafed to him similar to those of the persons in whom he believed, he never imagined that he was supernaturally gifted or visited. It has been proved that Christ was morally sound. It has

been shown that even infidels recoil from the startling impossibility of His perpetrating a trick. Was His enthusiasm, then, so uncontrollable, or His intellectual faculty so weak, that He was beguiled into delusions from which common sense guarded Mohammed and Edward Irving? Was His mind so strangely clouded, so hotly imaginative, that He believed Himself not to have seen a vision, or heard a voice, not to have healed one or two sick persons or calmed one or two maniacs, but to have cured blindness, deafness, lameness, leprosy, for years, by word or touch,—to have walked on the sea,—to have fed large multitudes with a few loaves and fishes,—to have dried up a tree with His rebuke,—to have, on several occasions, recalled the dead to life? The answer I shall be able to render is, that the Christ who laid claim to all this possessed the most clear, balanced, serene, and comprehensive intellect known to history.

Observe, first, that what may be called the temperament of Christ was of the kind specially opposed to enthusiasm. Personally pure and passionless, He was under no temptation similar to those to which strong animal natures—such

men, for instance, as Mohammed and "Joe Smith" — are exposed. His soul was celestially pure from sensual taint; His religion is, accordingly, the least sensual of all religions. But this very purity — this heaven-like spirituality of mind — lays one open to another danger, the danger of asceticism. It is a danger so subtle and so potent, that no religious development known among men has escaped *both* the sensual snare and the ascetic. Between these false extremes, all earth-born religions, and all corrupt forms of the Divine religion, have oscillated. Christians, when left to themselves, soon abandoned the golden mean. Age after age, the human minds which drank in most deeply the purity of Christianity were overcome by the beautiful and pathetic delusion, that while on earth men can eat angels' food — losing themselves in light, forgetting that it is to the rough music of duty and work that we must here walk, and floating off in trances of luxurious spirituality. But Christ was
] no more an ascetic than a sensualist. He set His brand upon polygamy, but gave no encouragement to celibacy. It was a robust virtue He taught, a virtue with foot firm planted on the

earth, a virtue arrayed in battle harness and stained with battle dust.

Christ's manner of life, again, was genial, sociable, broadly and healthily human. He partook in the natural enjoyments of life. He provided wine for a marriage feast. He sympathized with music and dancing to welcome back prodigals. He provoked the sneer of His adversaries that He "came eating and drinking." Things appeared to Him in their true relations, through the clear eye of sense. /

This is of all dispositions the least liable to delusion. The coincidence of such a disposition with the imagination of possessing power to raise the dead and to create food for multitudes, would be a more singular effect than the creation of a world. The human mind fails absolutely to conceive it. Jesus Christ was no shrieking fanatic, no dreaming visionary; His yea was yea, His nay, nay; His every perception was steady, clear, and calm. When He told the messengers of John that He raised the dead, He knew what He was saying as well as the most scientific head of the nineteenth century. 7

Remark, next, with what lofty and comprehensive discernment Christ rose above the erroneous ideas formed by His own disciples of His kingdom and His work. They were apt to kindle into fanaticism, or to break into intolerance; He retained ever the serenity of perfect wisdom, of perfect charity, of perfect self-command. They called for fire from heaven to burn up the Samaritan villagers who rejected Him. In so doing, they fell, in point of fact, into the error of Mohammed when he grasped the sword to spread his doctrines. If men repel the Holy One of God, ought they not to be consumed? Did not Elias call down fire from heaven to burn up the mockers? A greater than Elias was there. New heavens of spirituality, opening in placid azure deeps far above the lightnings and thunderings, the clouds and storms, of the old dispensation, were now being revealed. "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village." Christ's unerring judgment condemned as entirely as His infinitely tender heart the hasty zeal of His disciples. They would have shut the

mouth of every one not walking exactly in their footsteps. "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not us." Jesus recognized good in every form, and tolerated it under all drawbacks: "Forbid him not." They hankered after power and opulence; He not only rebuked, as satanic error, any such confusion between God and mammon, but abstained even from such delineations of the glories of a future state as might work upon the sensuous imagination. He trusted to truth; to truth permeating the world as leaven permeates the lump; to truth, growing slowly as the mustard-seed, but at last beneficently sheltering all the nations of the earth. Yet this same Jesus who so gently, calmly, and wisely composed the quarrels of His disciples, who checked their effervescing zeal, who knew at all times with the clearest consciousness that God's light of moral truth can, if God so wills it, dispense with the lightning of physical power to open its way or herald its advance, appealed to them on the miracles of feeding the multitudes, took them to witness His raising of the dead, and left His impress upon their memories as that of one who

constantly performed miraculous works. Could delusion so gross and pitiable have stolen upon an intellect so majestic in its calmness, so mighty in its power, so serene in its elevation?

It has already been pointed out that the purely spiritual conception formed by Christ of his own religion, tends to prove His perfect integrity. Less obviously, but with equal certainty, may it be argued that His intense and perpetual feeling of the moral and spiritual character of His religion rendered it unlikely that He should glide into any delusion as to the possession of miraculous powers. He kept constantly before His hearers the idea of the spirituality of His work. His kingdom, He said, came not with observation. In a series of marvellously beautiful and expressive parables, He indicated the gradual, spirit-like advance of His religion. It was to penetrate the mass of the world like leaven; it was to grow silently, gradually, as a tree; it was to use no weapon taken from the armories of earth. No man who has devoted any attention to psychological or biographical inquiries can fail to perceive that this conception, formed in an age like that in which Christ appeared, involved an

exhibition of *intellectual* power unexampled in history. It is sublime—infinately sublime. This Jewish peasant, wandering with a few poor mechanics about the inland seas and bordering wildernesses of Judea, homeless as the bird of the air and the fox of the hill, His meagre retinue forced sometimes to appease their hunger by rubbing out the ears of corn, rises to an apprehension of moral and spiritual power transcending infinitely that of the rulers, the priests, the teachers of His nation, and of all the sages and philosophers of His time. This Jewish peasant looks upon the glories of antiquity, upon the mighty edifice of ancient civilization, and is placidly, immovably assured that the words of truth spoken by His mouth in remote Palestine will smite its pinnacles with the fire of God, and strike down its cloud-capped towers, and of all the fabric of its vision leave not a wreck behind.

Readers may recall here the touching words in which Napoleon in St. Helena referred to Jesus Christ. It was this spirituality of the Saviour, His infinite superiority to the fierce and temporary forces which move men and nations, His Divine impersonation of those serene and mighty

powers, whose sphere is the spirit of man, whose agencies are the viewless influences of thought, — righteousness, mercy, truth, and love, — that amazed Napoleon. There, with the solemn ocean round him, and the silent sky above, the fierce passions which had so long raged in his heart growing still as the volcanic fires which once tore the heart of his lonely isle, he felt how the infinitude of calm in the mind of Jesus overarched all the working and all the warring of men. Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, Napoleon had founded empires, and they had passed away; but the influence of Jesus Christ, gentle as of sunlight over volcanic flame, was still sovereign in the souls of millions. Napoleon in St. Helena thought that an irrefragable proof that Christ was Divine.

But it is not with the sublimity, or even with the abstract intellectual sweep, of Christ's conception of His religion that we are immediately concerned. I would have it observed that His spiritual conception of His mission was peculiarly fitted to guard Him from delusion, if He had been gifted with no power superior to that of ordinary men. His nation looked doubtless for a miracle-working

Messiah. But they looked also for a conquering Messiah, crested with victory, to bow down the necks of their enemies. Nay, more; their conception of the use and purpose of the Messiah's miraculous power was connected with their idea of His work. They thought that it would be used to smite down opposing hosts. They were perplexed to see Christ working miracles, and yet refusing to be made a king. They were perplexed when he refused to exhibit a sign as a proof of His Divine mission. His conception of the use and purport of a miracle was as different from theirs as His conception of His kingdom. *Alone*, His miracles could not prove His mission : as mere signs by which sense might know God, He refused to work them ; those who would not believe without them, he put distinctly into a second place. He regarded them as a sublimely fitting, sublimely convincing, revelation of God's *power* side by side with the Christian revelation of God's *holiness*. And this was what not the Jews, not the multitudes, not even His own disciples, could comprehend. The people, we cannot doubt, were amazed and chagrined because He who could so plainly provision armies by a word, and blast

legions as He blighted the fig-tree, would not be persuaded to accept a crown. John, disconsolate in prison, could not understand why the thunders were sleeping in the hands of Christ, why Herod was not struck dead with a glance, and the bonds of the forerunner torn from his limbs. His own family could not imagine why He kept His power always in reserve, why He did not rally Israel round their irresistible leader by doing all He could, and doing it openly. The passers-by at Calvary wagged their heads, and could not understand how He who saved others could not save Himself. The miraculous power of Jesus was a problem and a mystery to all. His mother alone seems to have been led by perfect love to perfect, peaceful, spiritual faith: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." Never man occupied so solitary a pinnacle of spiritual elevation as Jesus Christ. And can we imagine that He who, in prophesying the ultimate spread and conquest of His religion, said nothing of miracle,—who as a mere matter of fact can be shown to have had a profounder conviction of the might of spiritual miracle than any man who ever lived,—and who, in working miracles, refused to accommodate

Himself to the cavillers of His nation,—that such a One dreamed Himself into the belief that He could feed thousands with a few loaves and fishes, still the tempest in its raging, and bid the the stone-cold corpse arise?

But I must hurry on, condensing material for volumes into one or two paragraphs. The reader must fill up by his own study the outline I endeavor to set before him.

Did it ever occur to him that the Christ of the Gospels is eminently *shrewd* and cool-minded? A weak and unwise reverence is apt, as was hinted, to prevent us from clearly and fully apprehending the many-sided character of Christ, and the effect takes place particularly in reference to qualities such as I now consider. The halo of moral light which surrounds Him obscures to us the robustness, the sharp-cutting vigor, the solidity, the acuteness, the adroitness, of His purely human understanding. His Gospel was the Gospel of love, but He was not in the least sentimental. In the parable of the talents, the doom of the man who obtained but one and hid it in a napkin seems hard in comparison with that of his more favored fellows; but it was just. The la-

borers who worked the whole day had really good (sentimental) reasons to urge why they should obtain a larger wage than those who wrought for only one hour; but Christ knew that he "who does justice most shows mercy most," and even-handed, iron-browed justice decided. None of your maudlin sentimentalities: "Didst thou not agree with me for a penny? I will give unto this last even as unto thee." The parable of the unjust steward reveals an exquisitely keen and alert appreciation of that self-helping shiftiness by which men of the world often put to shame the sheepish simplicity of "the children of light." Christ could teach His disciples by the example even of an avowedly "unjust" steward.

Observe, again, with what a fine, keen discrimination He deals with different minds. Christ's mode of treating diversities of character is a complete psychological study. The deepest root of motive is as clear to Him as the topmost flower of action. Those who believe that He was the Son of God, and that He had a supernatural insight into the heart, may see little wonderful in His "knowing what was *in* men." But those who believe that He was a moralizing doctor, be-

wildered into a notion that His cures were miraculous, are bound to account for His perspicacity on the hypothesis that He was deluded in the matter of His supernatural power. Can any one be named in history, sage or practical man, whose discernment of the line of demarcation between weakness, even vicious weakness, and deep-lying, deadly sin, was so exquisite? At first we may be startled—shallow minds have no doubt often been startled—by the contrasts by which we are here met. He has no sterner rebuke than majestic, upbraiding pity for the woman taken in adultery; yet He will not permit a man to follow Him on condition of first burying his father. He checks Peter as if he were a devil, for suggesting that He should not die; He has only a look of silent, appealing tenderness, when Peter denies Him with oaths. He drags out the greed and malignity which lurk behind the Pharisee's expostulation against the "waste" of the ointment. He demands the rich man's last penny as proof that he is sincere. In all these cases the principle on which He proceeds is perfectly, eternally correct. For human weakness—compassion; for repentance—mercy; for compromise be-

tween God and mammon—for service of His Father or Himself, with a qualification —“Get thee behind me, Satan.” Feebleness of constitution may be tenderly dealt with; cancer must be cut out. The sin of Peter was, strictly estimated, more deadly when, in crafty selfishness, he asked Christ to put away all thoughts of death, than when, in the tumult and terror of that appalling night, with fluttered nerves and fainting heart, he swore that he “knew not the man.” Consideration of Christ’s dealing with such cases has led me to believe that it was an *intellectual* perception which primarily determined His respective methods of rebuking Peter, when he said, “that be far from thee, Lord,” and when he denied Him. I entertain the same opinion regarding His prayer on the cross, “Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.” No doubt, the magnanimity which rendered so clear an appreciation of the motive of His murderers at that moment possible testified to the highest moral nature the world ever knew. But the words express a *fact*. The executioners of Christ and the yelling crowd were but instruments in the hands of the chief priests and rulers; they knew not what they did;

their sin was one of recklessness, of ignorance, of helpless stupidity, not the deadly, diabolical crime of the scribes and Pharisees. This affords the *rationale* of Christ's prayer; and the perception of this was an intellectual operation. At that awful moment, in the agonies of death, this God-like intellect acted with a calmness, a perspicacity, a faultless accuracy, such as in its serenest working we might look for, and look for in vain, from the intellect of a Shakspeare. The reason of Christ's prayer touches upon one of the profoundest principles of social and political philosophy: that, since the multitude errs for the most part unconsciously, it is the part of a wise, just, and humane man not to hate, not to scorn, but to pity, to teach and to guide them. Yet, as sure as this Christ has been named by history, He *professed* to work miracles. ✓

Another illustration, or series of illustrations, of the collectedness and calm perspicacity of the intellect of Christ is afforded by His answers to those who approached Him with false and insidious questions. If there is one capacity, more than another, characteristic of a wise, circumspect, and steady mind, it is the power to com-

bine perfect truthfulness and perfect civility with refusal to yield any satisfaction to inquisitive insolence, on the one hand, or to crafty malignity on the other. To lie is in all cases a sin; to throw open the breast for every man to pry into, is required of none. The character of the Homeric Ulysses, as profoundly conceived by Mr. Ruskin, in the last volume of *Modern Painters*, depended, in its intellectual aspect, on capacity to withdraw at will every thought and purpose from the vulgar gaze. Homer deemed this a proof of pre-eminent intellectual power. Reference is made to Ulysses solely, of course, to render it unmistakable what kind of ability is now pointed out. The wisest of the Greeks had no care for truthfulness; the answers of Christ, while transcending infinitely, in mere shrewdness and baffling ingenuity, the best uttered by the Greek, are at the same time immaculately truthful. Is it with an enigma, an intricate, puzzling case, that His enemies attempt to reduce Him to silence, and thus to humiliate Him before the people? Do they ask Him, for instance, how it will be in heaven with the woman married to seven brethren? He removes the difficulty in a moment by

enveloping the supposed case in a broader and more spiritual light than had dawned on their perceptions, and reveals at the same time a principle of universal and magnificent application to the relationships of humanity in time and in eternity. "In the resurrection, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage." That settles the whole matter. Has He to repulse a hypocritical and malicious inquiry touching the authority by which He works miracles? He achieves his purpose by putting the simple question whether the ministry of John was from heaven or of men. How perfect the appreciation of the character and circumstances of His assailants this displayed — how completely the question posed and silenced them! But the most wonderful of Christ's wonderful answers was given when He was asked whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar or no: "Render," He said, "unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." This is the wisest answer mentioned in profane or sacred history. In the first place, it absolutely struck dumb those who sought to betray Christ into an expression of hostility to the Roman power. To have taken

exception to it would have thrown them open to the charge to which they sought to expose Him. But while serving this first purpose, how marvelously rich are the words in significance and in truth! They indicate a fact and a law as long and as broad as human history — that where the dominion of conscience begins, the dominion of the civil magistrate ends. They enunciate a principle to regulate the conduct of Christ's Church in all ages towards the civil authority, providing for the harmonious, mutually beneficial action of each in its sphere. They are an exhaustive formula of duty, political and religious, — duty to God rising over and casting light upon duty to man, as the blue vault of heaven spans the green floor of earth. Think of the amplitude of intellectual vision displayed in those words; think of the delicacy of tact which applied them to the case in hand; and then say whether the intellect which produced them had anything in common with that of the fanatic or visionary, or whether it is conceivable that it dreamed itself into a belief of possessing miraculous powers.

But we have still to notice what is, I think,

the most rare and, so to speak, original quality of the Saviour's intellect. I called it the calmest and most perspicuous intellect known to history, and I did so mainly because no human intellect has ever come near it in what may be called two-sidedness, in the habit and capacity of seeing a fact or a truth on every side and in every light. What I mean will be understood by reference to the human intellect which approaches nearest in this respect to that of the Jesus of the Gospels, the intellect of Shakspeare. Readers must not be startled by this illustration. Christ as a whole can be compared with no man, and we are conscious of an infinite moral disparity when we compare Him with any mortal. But Christ's humanity was as real as that of any of us; and though His moral nature was, from first to last, stainless perfection, His intellect grew in His mother's house, and was limited by His perfect humanity. We may, therefore, without irreverence, compare it with any of the supreme intellects of the human race. All good critics have enlarged on Shakspeare's comprehensiveness, impartiality, placid breadth and tolerance of intellect. His mind was "no

twisted, poor, convex-concave mirror, reflecting all objects with its own convexities and concavities;" it was "a perfectly *level* mirror;" and in lordly procession, — with every lineament distinct, — with light and shade distributed in just proportions over all, — kings, ministers, generals, peasants, mechanics, passed along it. This is the supreme proof of mental tranquillity, of mental health; and it is because of the measure in which Shakspeare exhibits it that he is recognized as the sovereign intellect of mere humanity. But the intellect of Shakspeare was not so calm in its poise, so nicely apprehensive of every side and aspect of a matter, so wide in range through all moods of sound natural feeling, as the intellect portrayed in the Gospels. Christ could use words of burning indignation and godlike scorn:

+ "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" He could speak in terms of exquisite, pointed, perplexing irony; for so I interpret His words, when He told the scribes and Pharisees that they served themselves heirs to their fathers' cruelties against the prophets by rearing their monuments. His sayings and acts are the tenderest ever uttered

or ever done: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest;" "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven;" "He beheld the city and wept over it;" "He went about doing good." Every truth is seen by Him in its completeness; He utters no half-truths; and the very greatest human intellects utter hardly anything else than half-truths. He proclaims His gospel as the gospel of peace: "Peace I give unto you, my peace I leave with you;" but He knows that the pathway of truth and purity must be through the embattled squadrons of the powers of darkness; and "Think not," He says, "that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword." He bids His disciples regard themselves as blessed when evil is spoken against them by the world for His sake; but He remembers how easily the human heart takes flattering unction to itself when justly blamed, and does not omit to say that the evil must be spoken "falsely." He ordains that alms shall be done in secret, and sternly condemns the trumpeted prayer of the hypocrite; but He forgets not that

though villany may take the mask of virtue, virtue must still wear her frank smile and open brow, and commands His disciples to "let their light shine before men." He enjoins the wisdom of the serpent; He has no regard for devout maundering and pious ineptitude; but the wisdom He enjoins must be combined with the harmlessness of the dove. He denounces the substitution of scrupulous exactness in paying tithe of mint and anise and cummin, for the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy and faith; but He leaves no opening for the idea that tender conscientiousness is to be despised; "These ought ye to have done, *and not to have left the other undone.*" His eye embraces the balancings of the clouds and the courses of the heavens; it sees also the shadow cast by the daisy on the stone. Take one other instance of this transcendent calm, this all-comprehending tranquillity, perspicacity and justice, of the Saviour's mind. The scribes and Pharisees persecuted and afflicted Him during all the years of His ministry. Their hatred and malignity were infernal. At last they put Him to a death of torture. He was aware of their iniquity. He

knew the evil of their example. But was He driven by all He knew of their wickedness, by all He felt of their animosity, one hairsbreadth beyond the line of absolute *rightness* in His teaching regarding them? "The scribes and Pharisees," He said, "sit in Moses' seat; all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not." How perfect in wisdom, how absolute in justice, how incomparable in moderation! Am I not justified in saying that no intellect so clear, lofty, and placid as that of Jesus of Nazareth is known to history?

There is one other characteristic of Christ to be classed exclusively neither with the intellectual nor the moral powers, but tempering and beautifying both, which I must in no wise omit, — His habit of dwelling affectionately on the aspects of nature. In modern times we have seen admiration for the beauties and sublimities of natural scenery become a passion, and it may well be doubted whether, in fiery intensity and absorbing degree, it is always the symptom of a strong, balanced, or healthy mind. But in right quality and just measure it is, perhaps, a surer

proof of moral health and intellectual completeness than any mental characteristic that could be named. It testifies to an openness to gentle, unexciting influences, to a freshness of soul rejoicing in nature's dewdrops, to an innocence which can sympathize with the tender harmony of nature's joy. It evinces a delicacy of soul that would recoil with sensitive pain from guile, from malignity, from baseness. It may fairly be doubted whether any man retaining the child-love for green fields and morning flowers has ever been consciously and inveterately bad. In its noble form this love of nature is eminently a trait of Christian times. Paganism did not tone the mind finely enough for sympathy with nature's poetry. "I do not know," says Mr. Ruskin, "that of the expressions of affection towards external nature to be found among heathen writers, there are any of which the leading thought leans not towards the sensual parts of her. Her beneficence they sought, and her power they shunned; her teaching through both they understood never." For a Christian man, on the other hand, "it is not possible," says the same great writer, "to walk across so much as a rood of the

natural earth, with mind unagitated and rightly poised, without receiving strength and hope from some stone, flower, leaf, or sound, nor without a sense of a dew falling upon him out of the sky."

Now the Person who introduced this finer influence into life, this gentler music into civilization, was Jesus Christ. Those of His followers in Judea who knew of His habitual retirement "to the mountains for prayer, His temptation in the desert of the Dead Sea, His sermon on the hills of Capernaum, His transfiguration on the crest of Tabor, and His evening and morning walks over Olivet for the four or five days preceding His crucifixion, were not likely to look with irreverent or unloving eyes upon the blue hills that girded their golden horizon, or drew down upon them the mysterious clouds from the depths of the darker heaven." And Christ exalted our whole conception of nature by habitually associating it with the spiritual instruction of man. He made the wind God's minister to raise the mind of Nicodemus to a conception of the Spirit's influence; He quickened the Christian energies of His disciples by pointing to the fields whitening to harvest; He marked the flut-

tering wings over the stony uplands round the Galilean lake, and drew a warning for the frivolous and the fickle in all ages from the devouring of the seed by the birds and the withering of the shallow-rooted corn. While nature, in its beauty and hallowed suggestiveness, was ever present with Christ, He showed no trace of the ecstasy of mere indolent contemplation. He never paused to lay on the colors of the scene-painter. Nature He viewed as made for man ; her illuminated lettering He used to impress upon man the lessons of Divine wisdom ; the lilies of the field were to be *considered*, in their monitions to humility, in their lessons of trust in God, in their gentle yet most expressive satire on regal glory and gorgeous apparel.

All this attests a state of perfect mental health, a settled calm of power and peace, a still and placid elevation of soul, infinitely beyond reach of any cloud or any wind by which the clearness of the intellectual eye might be dimmed or its calmness fluttered.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COMBINATION OF MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL EXCELLENCE IN CHRIST.

AFTER what has preceded, it is like trying to enlarge the infinite to seek further evidence that, in affirming Himself to have raised the dead, Jesus Christ neither spoke falsely nor fell into mistake. It is, however, certain that we can never, by considering moral and intellectual qualities apart, arrive at any just conception of their united action ; and we must, therefore, endeavor to form some faint idea of their combination in the mind of the Saviour.

The intellectual and the moral elements of mind have a reciprocal influence. Intellect never works so powerfully as in alliance with moral integrity ; and conscience has no such auxiliary as mental power. In a mind of feeble capacity the moral sense is always at a disadvantage. Enthusiasm steals around it like a humid mist, diffract-

ing its beam, and dyeing it with a thousand colors ; or error is subtly insinuated into the oil by which its light is fed ; or the vapors of unquelled phantasy take shape of gigantic realities, and its ray falls in ghastly illumination on the wild dance of extravagance or delirium. Intellect clears and stills the mental atmosphere, so that the flame of conscience burns bright and steady. It brings discretion to take the hand of zeal, and knowledge to open her eyes ; it furnishes reflection to temper the fire of passion, and sagacity to use it ; it penetrates deception, detects error, suggests method, and preserves moderation. Intellect discerns the relations of things, so that conscience may apportion duty to each. Intellect puts the stake in the ground, so that the flower of moral feeling, which otherwise would be dragged in the mire, may run up it into light. Right moral qualities, on the other hand, are the guardian angels of intellect. They elevate its aims. They dash from its lip the heady wine of vanity and conceit. They avert the deadlier intoxication of pride. They protect it from the danger that lurks in every form of self-seeking.

Now we have seen that the character of

Christ's mind was superlative excellence, both intellectual and moral. The subtlest delusion creeping in would have been seen and smitten by the keen light of His intellectual vision. The most delicately plausible, the most tenderly disguised, of pious frauds, would have been pierced by the Ithuriel spear of His moral purity. In such a mind intellectual sight and moral intuition would be combined in one act of infallible reason, of reason poising itself as perfectly, floating as free, as a winged seraph in the air of heaven. Hence that Divine self-command and self-possession of Christ; that never-agitated repose; that calm, God-like majesty. He is never sudden, never partial, never impatient; His path is as the path of a star,—the Morning Star. His words, His actions, are simply, absolutely right. As we revolve those words and actions, a natural association seems to lead our thoughts to sublime and solemn objects,—the cloudless sky, the slumbering ocean, the everlasting hills. We feel ourselves unable to say that one excellence is more conspicuous in Him than another; all good havings, moral and intellectual, combine in Him into a serene perfection for which we

can find no name, unless it be of that ineffable Wisdom by which the crowned sage designated Christ of old.

Among the heedless sayings of skepticism, one of the most heedless, yet not least plausible, is, that the Eastern mind differs from the Western in an imaginative vagueness and superstitious credulity. These, it is said, obliterate the lines which separate fact from phantasy, and dispose to the wholesale acceptance of wonders. The miracles of Christianity, it is concluded, were but part and parcel of the airy architecture of Oriental poetry. Such are the arguments with which some content themselves, as they turn lightly away from the ladder of Divine revelation let down by God out of heaven, and declare it to be but a dream. How slight the effort of consideration required to prove the entire fallaciousness of such reasoning! The Jewish people, first of all, were markedly different from every other Eastern race. No nation ever was more practical. Amid the vagaries of Oriental polytheism they held firm the belief in one God; and for eighteen hundred years, though scattered and peeled, with nationality destroyed and scept-

tre broken; they have shown themselves capable of being pitted in the arena of commerce, of science, of art, and of literature, with the most robust and sharp-minded Western races. The Jews have been a gold-dust among the nations of modern Europe, a gold-dust which will one day be gathered into the crown of humanity. Christianity, in the second place, was, almost from the first, a thing of the West. It had not received its name when it was taken up by the acute Greek intellect; a few years after the death of Christ it was accepted in the city of Rome; it has since appeared too definite, practical, and calmly wise to be retained in purity by the Asiatic mind; but it "is still," as says Gibbon, "professed by the nations of Europe, the most distinguished portion of human kind in arts and learning as well as in arms." The most complete refutation, however, which can be conceived of this thoughtless sophism, is derived from a consideration of the exact balance of all powers in the Saviour's mind. Christ's parables and similitudes are clothed in no Oriental drapery; they have a chaste simplicity and clear-cut distinctness, which ally them to the

most exquisite poetry of ancient Greece and of modern Europe. In intellect, as in every human characteristic, Christ belongs not to a nation, but to mankind; He is the second Adam, the type of perfect humanity.

Is it not, then, I ask once more, incredible and inconceivable that this Christ should have said that He raised the dead without having done so?

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SEALING OF CHRIST'S TESTIMONY BY HIS DEATH.

THE bearing of Christ's death upon His testimony to the Divine origin of His religion can be briefly stated. His crucifixion was an infinitely solemn ratification of all He had asserted. This will become evident when we consider two points in connection with it.

In the first place, His death was manifestly contemplated by Him as a part of His ministry and priesthood, and, as such, distinctly foreseen. Consistently with the pervading spirituality of His views of His mission, He regarded His death as completing its lessons, filling out its moral significance, and crowning its mighty purpose of wisdom and of love. Of this there is indubitable proof in the fact that three Evangelists narrate His prediction of His decease. It is not necessary for our argument to suppose that, in uttering this prediction, He put in exercise a

supernatural power of foreseeing events. To an intellectual eye like Christ's, all-embracing in its range, all-penetrating in its clearness, it is difficult to know how much of the page of the future would necessarily lie bare. The thing to be observed is, that while proclaiming doctrines of celestial purity and self-evidencing truth, and while distinctly affirming His supernatural power, He calmly informed His disciples that His own death was embraced in the purpose for which He came into the world. It was as if He had said:—"The words I speak, taken in conjunction with the life I lead, are proof that I come from God; the works I do are a further attestation by God the Creator that I am from Him; and in testimony that I put my own trust in this witness, in testimony that I believe the words I speak to be God's words, and the works I do to be God's works, I shall lay down my life." Imagination can conceive no stronger proof of sincerity.

In the second place, the manner in which Christ went to death was conspicuously in accordance with this view of His decease as confirming all testimony previously given by Him to the Divine origin of His religion. Our infor-

mation as to His death is peculiarly ample. All the Evangelists dwell upon it. "The fulfilment," says Ellicott, "of type and shadow, of the hopes of patriarchs, of the expectations of prophets, yea, and of the dim longings of a whole lost and sinful world, must be declared by the whole evangelistic company; the four streams that go forth to water the earth must here meet in a common channel; the four winds of the Spirit of Life must here be united and one." And in each of the narratives of Christ's trial and crucifixion there is one broad and well-marked characteristic. They all represent Jesus as preserving a mental state of perfect calmness, a demeanor of absolute self-possession. He cannot but have known, from the moment of His arrest, that the implacable malignity of the rulers and Pharisees, and the blind fury of the mob they hounded on, would compass His death. Men say that in immediate prospect of decease the whole events of a past life flit in distinct colors and vivid outlines before the mind; and whether this is generally the case or not, it is impossible to read the narrative of the Saviour's trial, and to observe the calmness and clearness of His answers, with-

out feeling that every occurrence of His ministry must have then lain under the perspicuous glance of His recollection. At that moment, He must have been distinctly conscious that He had professed to raise the dead, to still the tempest, to create food for multitudes, to open the eyes of those born blind. In the glare of confronting death, how completely would He have felt every plausible sophistry of pious fraud, every fond delusion of imagined power, to be shrivelled up! But He never faltered. He was what He had declared Himself to be from the beginning. When He was weak as a lamb in the hands of its destroyer, when the arm of His Father was restrained, when no angel-hand was present to wipe His blood-stained brow, His faith that He had bid the winds be still, and the dead start up alive, was as firm as when the multitudes cast their garments in His way, and hailed Him as the King of Israel coming in the name of the Lord. That is a fact—a plain, historical fact. Four witnesses attest this attitude of Christ before His accusers, and the wildest credulity of skepticism must shrink from the idea that four men have existed in this world who could have

drawn four such pictures as that of Christ in His trial and crucifixion, if there had been no original for the portrait, no actuality for the occurrence. And if Christ died as the Evangelists represent Him as dying, can words be found strong enough to express the confirmation thus afforded to all He had previously declared?

CHAPTER IX.

THE TESTIMONY TRUE.

§ I. THE MIRACLES.


It will be interesting now to glance back upon that strange trial by proxy, on strength of which Hume so unceremoniously dismissed the miracles of Christianity, and to take up in detail the mighty works, whose evidence that acute and grave philosopher pronounced superior to the evidence of the wonders wrought by Christ. Hume's cases of apparently demonstrated, but confessedly false, miracle are three in number. Let us take them up in succession.

First: Tacitus reports of Vespasian that he cured in Alexandria a blind man by means of his spittle, and a lame man by the touch of his foot. The cures took place "in obedience to a vision of the god Serapis," who enjoined the sufferers to have recourse for aid to the Emperor. Vespasian, argues Hume, was a man of "gravity,

solidity, age, and probity;" Tacitus was a contemporary writer, candid, veracious, penetrating, and leaning rather to skepticism than credulity; the persons who informed him of the circumstances, presumably sensible and veracious, were eye-witnesses, and had no motive for falsehood; the facts themselves were of a public nature. Could evidence, he asks in conclusion, "well be supposed stronger?" Yet was the whole affair "a gross and palpable falsehood."

Is it dishonest art or felicitous artlessness which runs through this whole statement? Was Hume's acuteness at fault, or his cunning in exercise, when he left absolutely out of consideration the point on which the whole matter depends? The witnesses were probably guilty of no falsehood; Tacitus had no intention to deceive; Vespasian did not lie: but what of the *deus ex machina*, the god Serapis, whose inspiration put the entire business afloat? An Emperor on a royal progress would not do so unpopular a thing as disoblige a local divinity. Vespasian's retinue saw what appeared on the surface, and veraciously reported the same. But Serapis,—what of Serapis? Was it quite beyond possi-

bility that the priests of the Egyptian divinity should avail themselves of the presence of the Emperor to do a stroke in trade? It is painful to reflect, in reference both to Hume and the priests of Serapis, that the character of the latter is not above suspicion. The Romans of the middle of the second century were no rigid moralists; but when the worship of Serapis was introduced about that time into the city, it proved so abominable as to be put down by the senate. Now, it happens that blindness and lameness are specially easy of simulation. The priests of Serapis — the god, by the way, was only a bull — could have had both these maladies acted to perfection, by Alexandrian street beggars, for the matter of two half-crowns. Surely, such being the case, it is childish to talk of the existence of *proof* that the men were either blind or lame. It is not impossible that the Vespasianic cure of lameness by touch of the foot might be used with good effect in the streets of London. It would have been instructive as well as interesting to know whether the Emperor wore a boot, and to what part of the person he applied the healing kick.



But there is something else in this Serapian miracle which will arrest an observant eye. The blind man was cured by the application of "spittle." It is on record that *another* miracle was performed on a blind man in a manner exactly similar. And just about the time when Vespasian made his progress through Egypt, the priests of Serapis would be much plagued by the progress of the religion founded by Him who performed that other miracle. It was a shrewd speculation, that if the bull ordered, and the Emperor performed, a mighty work resembling one narrated in the Gospels, the thing would tell against Christianity. No intelligent man will hesitate to pronounce this the origin of the whole affair.

Of these Vespasianic wonders Hume speaks as among "the best attested miracles in all profane history." And he is probably right.

Hume's second well-attested false miracle is that related by the Cardinal de Retz. "When that intriguing politician," says Hume, "fled into Spain, to avoid the persecution of his enemies, he passed through Saragossa, the capital of Arragon, where he was shown, in the cathedral, a man.

who had served seven years as a doorkeeper, and was well known to everybody in town that had paid his devotions at that church. He had been seen for so long a time wanting a leg, but recovered that limb by *the rubbing of holy oil upon the stump*; and the cardinal assures us that he saw him with two legs." I have put in italics the very obvious explanation of this "miracle." The limb had been shrunk or paralyzed. By rubbing with oil its use was restored, and the oil happening to have been "holy," the fact was accepted as a miracle. The man, I observe, had *rubbed* his leg with the oil. Had he been in quest of a miracle, had he not looked for a natural effect, he might have *poured* the sanctified liquid upon the stump, or, in fact, would have had recourse to the cheaper, and, in miraculous respects, I presume, equally efficacious remedy, holy water. Persons with stiff legs might do worse than try rubbing with Saragossa oil, holy or profane.

Hume's third case remains. It is not, like the others, simply absurd, and will repay a rather more careful consideration.

"There surely never was," he observes, "a

greater number of miracles ascribed to one person than those which were lately said to have been wrought in France upon the tomb of Abbé Paris, the famous Jansenist, with whose sanctity the people were so long deluded. The curing of the sick, giving hearing to the deaf and sight to the blind, were everywhere talked of as the usual effects of that holy sepulchre. But, what is more extraordinary, many of the miracles were immediately proved upon the spot before judges of unquestioned integrity, attested by witnesses of credit and distinction, in a learned age, and on the most eminent theatre that is now in the world. Nor is this all. A relation of them was published and dispersed everywhere; nor were the *Jesuits*, though a learned body, supported by the civil magistrate, and determined enemies to those opinions in whose favor the miracles were said to have been wrought, ever able distinctly to refute them."

Hume has an easy way of accounting for all this. Lies! lies! lies! "It is nothing strange, I hope," says the philosopher, with an amiable smile, "that men should lie in all ages." Hume has great confidence in man's power of lying.

A lie is the devil's talisman, with which this philosopher opens all the secret doors of history. The events said to have occurred at the abbé's tomb were, he conceives, absolutely impossible or miraculous. What then? Why, the "cloud of witnesses" told lies. It is bootless to ask how or why; the whole vaporous agglomeration is dispelled by the keen, clear light of philosophy.

Well-informed and thinking persons will hesitate in the present day to accept this explanation. Lies are prevalent to a lamentable extent, but there is such a thing in the human breast as a passion for truth. Cool, deliberate, intentional lying is less common than might be maintained by a Mephistopheles or a Hume. It is an interesting and suggestive fact, that, even in Hume's former cases, the *testimony* of the unbiassed and capable witnesses to the so-called miracles was sound. Vespasian, Vespasian's retinue, and Tacitus, spoke what to them was truth. That one man apparently blind, and another apparently lame, did suddenly see and walk when the Emperor, bidden by Serapis, operated upon them, is a historical fact. Lying came into play only in case

of those who had an object in lying, to wit, the blackguard priests of Serapis. The canons of Saragossa were also, if credulous, not necessarily dishonest. A limping doorkeeper, who rubbed his leg with holy oil, regained, sure enough, its perfect use. We accept the fact, though we question the inference, and do not at once remit the cardinal and the canons, with the coolness of Hume, to the inspiration of the father of lies. Lying for the sake of lying, devil-worship out of pure, impartial, unadulterated reverence for that potentate, will, thank God, explain not quite so much in human history.

In Hume's third case of false miracle, — that of the cures effected at the tomb of Abbé Paris, — there was, I believe, as little intentional falsehood as in the others. But this renders its explanation only a little more difficult. We know now, better than was known in the last century, that extraordinary bodily effects are produced by extraordinary mental emotions. The excitable French peasantry, on approaching the tomb of Abbé Paris, fell into transports of excitement. Their bodies were acted on by a force powerful as phrensy. Apparent and temporary, or even,

in some cases, real cures, may have been produced. When the tomb was rendered inaccessible, the ecstasies of emotion lost their occasion, and no more "miracles" were wrought. The rational and satisfactory explanation of the affair is, that the occurrences were not miraculous. None of the cures mentioned by Hume were necessarily beyond reach of natural causes.

Such are the most telling instances of recorded "miracle" which one of the ablest and best-read of infidels could bring into comparison with those of Christ.

In turning to the miracles of our Lord, the change of which we are sensible is infinite. We have left the mist; we stand upon the mountain.

The works done are, to begin with, beyond conceivable reach of natural causes. Let us select two of Christ's miracles as types: raising the dead; and feeding five thousand, besides women and children, with a few loaves and fishes.

Remark, — the point is of importance, — that unless the power purporting to be miraculous has in at least one instance of its exercise been indubitably preternatural, it is only reasonable to

believe the whole series of wonders explicable on natural grounds; whereas, if an energy beyond question creative has once been put in exercise, it is a slight additional claim on our faith to demand belief in any number of what may be called secondary miracles. An alleged preternatural cure of deafness or paralysis, performed by one who did no other wonderful work, may not unwarrantably be supposed a freak of nature or an ingenious fraud. But if it is absolutely demonstrated that such a One raised the dead or created food for thousands, we must regard the probability infinitely extended that His power included the healing of diseases. We know Him to have at command an energy by us inconceivable and incommensurable, — the energy to which is referred the creation of worlds, — and we can be no longer surprised by any instance of its exercise. One miracle irrefragably proved, it becomes easy to believe whole dispensations of miracle.

It is manifest that both the miracles here selected as crucial instances of Christ's wonder-working power are, if facts at all, facts of a supernatural character. To rekindle the spark of

life in the clammy dead, to create the elements of human sustenance, — these are things indisputably beyond reach of natural agencies. The question is whether they are proved; and this question we are now in a position to answer in reference to Christ Jesus.

We have for them not merely an external attestation equal, perhaps superior, to that for any facts mentioned in history, but the explicit testimony of Christ himself. "The dead are raised up:" Christ spoke these words. That He did so, has been demonstrated. The miracle of feeding the multitude is similarly attested. Not only do all four Evangelists relate it, but two of them introduce Jesus expressly referring to it. In one word, we have, apart from all other evidence, indubitable proof that Jesus Christ *said* that He raised the dead and created food for multitudes.

Let us clearly apprehend the peculiarity and importance of the *personal* testimony of Christ to His miraculous powers. "In appreciating the evidence for *any* events," says Mr. Baden Powell, "of a striking or wonderful kind, we must bear in mind the extreme difficulty which always occurs in eliciting the truth, dependent not on

the uncertainty in the transmission of testimony, but, even in cases where we were ourselves witnesses, on the enormous influence exerted by our prepossessions previous to the event, and by the momentary impressions consequent upon it." It may be difficult to observe a miracle, but it is easy to hear a word. There was nothing miraculous, nothing "striking or wonderful" in the *utterance* by Christ of the declaration that He raised the dead. Witness after witness gives *the very words* in which He made this assertion. The fact that He existed at all is not more certain than the fact that He *claimed* miraculous power. It could be proved from profane history, if the Gospels had never been written. This, then, brings the possibility of falsehood or mistake within limits much more narrow than those contemplated by Mr. Powell. "I saw a man raising the dead:" but my nerves may have been fluttered, and my eyes may have deceived me. "I raised the dead; I created food for a multitude:" this is a very different affair. The evidence of my consciousness,—the evidence I have that I move this limb or speak this word,—the evidence I have of my personal

identity,—is now added to the external evidence of sense. The possibilities of mistake are really very limited. A sane man is not likely to believe himself able to recall the dead to life; and it would be an unprecedented caprice of imagination which led one to fancy that he had supplied food to a vast number of persons if he had given them nothing. The alternative is deliberate lying.

“Deliberate lying.” I must once more beg the reader to observe that this is a far rarer thing in connection with real or fancied miracle than was once generally supposed. “Man everywhere is the born enemy of lies,” says a nobler and profounder skeptic than Hume; and the results of mature science and of minute historical investigation coincide with this proud witness of the heart. We saw that, in the *testimony* to Hume’s so-called miracles, there was hardly a trace of conscious falsehood. Mr. Baden Powell mentions, in his contribution to “Essays and Reviews,” a number of instances in which skeptics once believed men alleging wonders to have lied, but in which the truthfulness of human testimony is now vindicated. The supposed miracles have

been resolved into natural phenomena, but the witnesses are absolved of falsehood. The wonders related by Marco Polo were deemed incredible. The miracle of the martyrs who spoke articulately after their tongues were cut out was thought a lie. The two thousand persons who declared that they saw an angel in the air at Milan were presumed to be knaves or fools. The miraculous balls of fire on the spires at Plausac were laughed at. The story of Herodotus about the bird in the mouth of the crocodile was supposed to be a clever embellishment of his narrative, invented by the picturesque Greek to tickle his Olympian audience. But it is now known that the excision of the whole tongue does not take away the power of speech. It is now known that the angel at Milan was the aerial reflection of an image on a church. It is now believed that the Plausac balls of fire were electrical. Herodotus and Marco Polo were no liars. What is the first legitimate conclusion from all this? Is it, as Mr. Powell decides, that we must believe in the "*universal subordination of physical causes*," that we must recognize the absolute certainty that every sensible fact has a physical

explanation? No. The first and the most important deduction to be drawn from these and similar cases is, that, in accounting for prodigies, the hypothesis of conscious lying goes but a little way. In connection with all those false miracles, the witnesses were not false. Had men been bold to say for ages, "We shall believe that, in all these cases, the laws of nature were suspended, rather than that so many persons were deliberate liars," the procedure would have been wise, noble, and correct. The inference that nature is capable of explaining more things than is commonly supposed, is, in the second place, perfectly just. Mr. Powell had the best right to apply to Christ's miracles whatever physical cause might explain them. But if he found the exclusion of natural cause palpable and indubitable, he was bound to admit that all experience only added to his reasons for accepting the testimony of honest men concerning them.

The supremely wonderful thing, after all, both in Hume's and in Baden Powell's treatment of the question of miracle, is the profound unconsciousness of those writers to the nature of the problem with which they had to deal. The utter

triviality of the proofs adduced by Hume for miracles which he imagined to be as well established as those of Christ, demonstrates that he had never apprehended the very terms of the historical problem presented by our Saviour. It never dawned upon Baden Powell, that if we granted him that Christ had *not* wrought miracles, he would still be confronted by a stupendous difficulty. His apparatus of natural cause might be great; could he have satisfactorily applied it to the raising of the dead, and the feeding of seven or eight thousand persons with a few loaves and fishes? The tendency of his own argument from experience is to render it supremely unlikely that even the disciples of Christ should have lied. But we have adduced irrefragable proof that Christ Himself deliberately declared that He had wrought miracles in those instances, and it is inconceivable that He was mistaken. Will Hume or Baden Powell brand the forehead of Christ, that forehead from which truth beams as from the moral sun of the universe, with that plague-spot of falsehood which history and science remove more and

more from the brows of erring and ordinary mortals?

Hume and Powell have departed; but Christians ought still to call on unbelievers to do what Hume and Powell did not, namely, with calmness, with honesty, with deliberation, to take up and try to solve the historical difficulty presented by Christ. After nearly two thousand years, those who refuse to have Christ as their spiritual King have not succeeded in explaining the enigma of His life. There is, strictly speaking, no infidel theory of Christ and Christianity at present in the field. Let the purport of this assertion be understood. I should not feel justified in making it so broadly, by the mere circumstance that rejecters of Christianity are not *agreed* in their explanations of the historical problem presented by Christ. I should attach slight importance to minor discrepancies. Philosophers may have refused to yield certain particular positions to the Newtonian philosophy long after they had arrived at the decisive unanimity of science as to its essential facts. Their theorizing on non-essentials would not have availed to restore credit to the Ptolemæan sys-

tem of astronomy. But against the Christian explanation of the life and character of Christ there is no infidel theory, to the very principle and essence of which infidels profess agreement. The infidel theories of last century have been dust under the feet of infidels in the present. I doubt whether any skeptical theory has held undisputed sway among unbelievers in Christianity for ten years. Theory after theory has emerged; theory after theory has been greeted with exultant welcome by men who had made up their minds to reject Christ; and theory after theory, fluttering aloft for a brief space, like a moth in the wind, has been borne away forever. The plausible flippancies of Voltaire, and the coarse ribaldries of Paine, turning on the hypothesis that Jesus was an impostor and His disciples knaves or fools, had its day; but what skeptic of education and intelligence would not be ashamed to own that hypothesis now?¹ The

¹ I observe that Professor Mansel mentions, in his *Essay on Miracles*, in "Aids to Faith," a book which I did not see until most of the proofs of this volume had been corrected, that Bruno Bauer has returned to the hypothesis which ascribes the Gospels to deliberate fabrication.

theory that Christ was a mythical personage, magnified and irradiated by the halos of reverential memory, was once eagerly accepted. Does any person now believe in Strauss's *Life of Jesus*? The Tübingen school, rising like cloudy exhalation from the cooling volcano of Hegelianism, propounded its theory of development; and for many a day its sages were mysteriously referred to, in skeptical publications in this country, as having at last solved the insoluble problem. But the artifice of mysterious reference could be at best provisional; and no sooner was the monstrous hypothesis of Tübingen apprehended by the intellect of Britain, than it was instinctively discarded. "There is not," said Isaac Taylor, a year or two ago, "so far as I know, at this time afloat any accepted and available non-Christian solution of the enigma regarding the origin of Christianity; non-belief at this moment has come to a stand-still." The heart of the enigma lies in the life and character of Christ. I am justified, therefore, in saying that infidelity has failed utterly to solve the problem of the historical Christ.

But is it not reasonable to press for a solu-

tion? Is it not fair to demand that on such a subject there shall be no vagueness, no evasion, no indecision? Tried by any test, Christianity deserves the respect of men. The two thousand years during which it has been called by that name have been years of progress from the impure to the pure, from the barbarous to the humane, from the worse to the better. Christian civilization has been of a higher strain than Pagan civilization. It has given woman her place. It has hedged round human life with new sanctions, putting a stop to infanticide, to torture, to gladiatorial shows. It has cast into shadow the glory of war as compared with the glory of peace. It has abolished caste. It has condemned slavery. If the race has outgrown Christianity, let it solemnly be put away; but the dignity of humanity requires that it be not shuffled aside without being distinctly accounted for as a historical phenomenon. In the name of God and man alike, we may demand clearness on such a subject. It is not a case for applause of Christian ethics or compliments to the character of Christ. We want to know whether what Christ said of Himself was *true* — true when He spake

in Judea, true now, true when yon sun shall fade like a leaf from heaven — true as a law for life, and a hope in death — true with the combined and eternal truthfulness of the highest man and of present God. It is surely incumbent upon every one who has come before the public as an ethical instructor, and who does not accept Christ as sent by God to men, — upon Mr. Carlyle, Mr. J. S. Mill, Mr. G. H. Lewes, and others, — to set forth explicitly their view of Christ's life and character. Let me render very plain what I mean.

Mr. Francis Newman has given to the world a theory of the historical Jesus. He makes out Christ, as I understand him, to be one of the worst men known to history. Mr. Thomas Carlyle, on the other hand, has never referred to Christ personally without expressions of reverence and admiration, while it is known to all who are intelligently acquainted with his writings that he looks upon the Christian miracles as "incredibilities," and does not accept Christ as commissioned by God to promulgate a religion binding on men throughout all ages. Yet Mr. Carlyle has never put on record his estimate of

Christianity as a historical phenomenon, or given a theory of Christ's life and character. Mr. Newman's talents I cannot pretend to estimate highly, and his theory of Christ shocks and astounds me; Mr. Carlyle I humbly regard as perhaps the most marvellous genius of the century, and with much in the ethical spirit of his works I intensely sympathize; but the procedure of Mr. Newman in this instance seems to me more worthy of approval than Mr. Carlyle's. Mr. Newman saw that the rejection of Christianity necessitated a decision as to the character of Christ. To reject Christianity, and yet regard Christ as a just and honest man, he felt to be impossible. He struck boldly out, therefore; he constructed a theory of Christ's history; that theory is inconceivable and incredible to all human beings except himself; but it is a frank attempt to solve the problem before him, and affords a perfect vindication of his own consistency. Mr. Carlyle invariably mentions Christ as One who stood so far above common humanity, that common men might not unnaturally bow down to worship him; yet, when we press for an answer to the question how this ideal Man got mixed up with such "incredibili-

ties" as feeding five thousand on a few loaves and fishes, walking on the sea, raising the dead, — when we exclaim that the imputation to Him of honesty only darkens the enigma of His character if He was not what his disciples believed Him, — Mr. Carlyle is dumb.

It is a bitter insult, on the part of such as he, to say, or to leave it to be implied, that the cause of their silence is willingness to spare our religious sensibilities. Let them be bold to treat us as men. Let them make a clean sweep of our cherished ineptitudes. The rock of truth may be bare, but there are Christians among us who can believe it better to have the foot numbed by its cold hardness, and torn by its splintered ruggedness, than placed on the softest carpeting of falsehood; nay, whose faith is immovable that its surface, barren at first as the rock-foundations of the world, will soften in rain and quicken in sunshine, and bear in due time the goodly flower and the golden grain. Away with falsehood; let truth be revealed. Only let the work be done soberly, avowedly, deliberately. No man has a right to call Christ's miracles "incredibilities,"

until he has clearly and conclusively disproved them.

Meanwhile, I am bound to conclude that the testimony of Christ to the reality of His miracles is true; that He put in exercise a power beyond that of nature,—a power such as God alone, or one commissioned by God, could wield; that, at His creative word, “the blind received their sight, the lame walked, the lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, and the dead were raised up.”

§ II.—THE GOOD TIDINGS.

“To the poor the gospel is preached.” This formed the second part of that summary of evidence that He was the Messiah which was sent by Christ to John. Was it also true? Were the tidings brought by Christ to the poor really good? Were they worthy of being touched with the signet-ring of God by miracle, and was their excellence so durable that we may rejoice in them still?

It will be necessary, in answer to this question, to state briefly what seems to reveal itself to a candid examination as the heart of the message delivered by Christ to those who heard Him.

He re-proclaimed, first of all, in its integrity, the moral law as communicated to Moses, connecting in one universally binding and exhaustive formula of duty the two precepts of the Pentateuch, — Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might,¹ and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.² With radiant clearness, with earnestness unspeakable, with simplicity divine, He preached the great elementary principles of morality, — justice, mercy, reverence, and truth. These He showed to be the soul of religion, the most apt and sublime homage which man can render to his God. It was these that gave significance to type and importance to ceremonial. Without these the purest profession of faith was to Him hypocrisy, and the most gorgeous ritual paint upon a tomb. Their throne was to be the heart. External observances, except as signs of an inner dominion of godliness, were worse than nothing.

He inculcated a pervasive and unbounded reverence for God; a dedication of the life to Him; a preference of His approval to all earthly

¹ Deuteronomy vi. 5.

² Leviticus xix. 18.

things; a fear of His displeasure as the worst possible calamity. God himself was to be man's model of virtue: "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Deliberate, inflexible submission to God's will in all things, and confidence that in all things that will must be best, were to regulate man's feelings in reference to his earthly condition. The just temper of soul Christ declared to be the calm of contentment and trust, every sense, every faculty, opening like a lily to receive God's dew of blessing, God's light of love, but folding up in peaceful resignation, never in fretfulness, never in despair, when the silver lining of the cloud ceased to be visible.

He hurled Pride forever from that seat of honor which it occupied in the ethical system of antiquity; and He put in its place the figure of Humility, kneeling, with clasped hands and bended brow, saying, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." He marked it as worthiest of a man not to conquer the striker by returning his blow, but first to conquer the fierce impulse which burns to return it, and then to conquer

him by the look of compassion and the smile of forgiveness.

Both by precept and example, He enjoined an orderly and loyal procedure in every civic capacity, rendering unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, bidding the people listen deferentially to their teachers, and paying tribute rather than create dispute. At the same time, His whole life as a man was an infinitely impressive recognition of the essential equality of mankind on the basis of a common immortality and a common responsibility. The doctrine of caste in its every modification, whether as pride of birth, or of rank, or of wealth, or of culture, He tore up by the roots; not by reducing humanity, either at once or prospectively, to a dead level, but by piercing beneath every artificial distinction of class and costume, and recalling human relationships to the divinely ordained scale of worth and capacity. "The example of Christ," it has been truly said, "stands in marked contrast with the habits of all classes of men in His time. He does not seem to have thought of men as they stand in society grouped in classes, separated or united by various customs, nor even as they were sepa-

rated and classed by the result of their moral conduct. He seems simply and quietly, but always, to have beheld them in their original and spiritual relations, to each other, to God, and to eternity." Neander, who drank, perhaps, more deeply into the inner spirit of Christianity than any other man since the Apostolic age, dwells largely on the all-important fact that Christianity annihilates what he calls the "aristocratism" of antiquity. That aristocratism was displayed mainly in two ways: first, in the division of men into esoteric and exoteric circles,—the few capable of refinement, and the many doomed to perpetual ignorance; second, in the separation of political communities into a governing and a subject class,—into freemen and slaves. "It was not till the word that went forth from the carpenter's lowly roof had been published by fishermen and tentmakers, that these aristocratic notions of the ancient world could be overthrown." All that has ever been said in eloquence or in song of the majesty of man, as such, dwindles into insignificance when placed in comparison with its practical proclamation in the spectacle of Jesus Christ choosing as His disciples

the fisherman and the publican, wandering homeless among the green hills of Judea, and having as His audience the multitude. "The one occasion on which Christ marked His sense of the fact that He was conferring an honor, was when He went to break bread with a rich man; the one man of whom He spoke in terms of slighting contempt was a king.

Nor did the people of Judea, it is worthy of remark, show themselves altogether unworthy of the honor done them by the Saviour. It is a fact, historically beyond doubt, that the commonalty were His friends and defenders. "The common people heard Him gladly." "Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people." "They sought to take Him, but they feared the multitude." Let this fact not be disguised. Let it be mentioned to the everlasting honor of the multitude; to the silencing forever, in all Christian countries, of those Sadducees who find in the raiment of culture more than in the soul and spirit of a man; to the refutation of those Pagan theorists who would say to the wave of moral, of social, of intellectual, of political advancement, Hitherto shalt thou come

and no further. The people did not desert Christ. A venal rabble, the offscourings of Jerusalem, were sent by the rulers and priests to arrest Jesus under cloud of night, when "the people" who had cried hail to Him that cometh in the name of the Lord were silent in their chambers after eating the Passover. In the light of day they dared not have done it. A body-guard of poor men surrounded the Poor Man of Galilee. True, the people did not understand Him. True, neither they nor His disciples could watch for Him one hour. True, when the conspirators were hurrying through His mock-trial, they were asleep. True, their hopes may have died in the shadow that veiled the sun over His cross, and they could not tell why He whom they would so gladly have forced to be a king should hang upon a tree. So it has ever been. The people in all ages are weak, liable to be misled, swayed by impulse; but for deliberate wickedness, for purposeful malice, you must look beneath the hood of the priest, the robe of the rich man, or the academic stole of the Sadducee; the multitude always *means* nobly, and its heart, well struck, responds to the true and the right.

Christ spoke to the people plainly, glowingly, kindly, popularly; and all the wiles of Scribe or Pharisee could not blind them to the fact that God was with Him. When the resurrection morn had dispelled the gloom of Calvary, and the Spirit of Christ descended at Pentecost, there were thousands of poor men ready to form the Christian Church of Jerusalem. With a literalness and an emphasis of meaning which we habitually fail to recognize, Christ could say of His teaching, "Unto the poor the gospel is preached."

While thus simple, broad, and practical in the grand features of His doctrine, Christ opened up wells of spiritual truth to which the sounding-line of antiquity never reached—depths of ethical meaning into which, after eighteen hundred years, we can but faintly look. He revealed to mankind the infinite of love working mysteriously through suffering. "I suppose," says Archer Butler, "it may be said with truth, that if any man were to be asked what it is that characterizes Christianity as a practical system distinguishably from all that preceded it, or from all that have followed without imitating it, he might

state it correctly enough in two words, *love* and *sorrow*: the blessedness of mutual affection, and the blessedness of suffering. . . . In Christ Himself, who is His own religion alive and in action, they seem, like rainbow colors, evermore blended and lost in each other: He is the immortal image of both; love and pain are the footprints by which we trace Him from page to page. And who shall say *which* was foremost on Calvary? Love drew the godhead of Christ from its throne; sorrow, sanctifying sorrow, lifted the manhood into meetness to share it."

Jesus Christ, then, stands before us in the evangelical narratives as first of all and always, from the baptism of water to the baptism of anguish, the Divine Moralist.

It appears, in the next place, that Christ required belief in Himself as the Messiah of God, and distinctly stated this as the condition of salvation. He called upon all, without distinction or exception, to come unto Him, to believe in Him, and to accept at His hand the gift of peace and rest. He was announced as the Jesus who was to save His people from their sins; and it becomes manifest in His teaching that a special

significance attaches to His death in connection with the remission of sins. He said that He laid down His life for His friends. He said that He gave His life "a ransom for many," these words being as literal a translation of the Greek words, *λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν*, as can be rendered. Such expressions must indicate more than a mere moral lesson.

Besides describing Himself as the Son of man, Christ called Himself the Son of God, alleged His pre-existence, and declared Himself one with the Father. And in addition to Himself and the Father, He spake of another Existence, the Spirit of truth, the Holy Ghost. To speak a word against the Holy Ghost He declared to be the worst of all blasphemies, the unpardonable sin. There thus dawns from the evangelic page, as part of the revelation made by Christ, the mysterious and sublime truth, vaguely guessed at in the most venerable of false religions, dimly surmised by the most thoughtful sages of antiquity, that in the unity of the Godhead there is a tri-unity, that the Divine Elohim who created all worlds is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The material universe,

the soul of man, the purpose and plan of infinite wisdom and mercy by which man is redeemed, are the work of Three in One. There is ever tri-unity of operation, though the result is the flawless unity of Divine perfection; as in that ancient statue, so harmonious in its completeness that it seemed designed and executed by one, yet known to have been the work of three.

Into fellowship, friendship, oneness with this God, Jesus Christ proclaimed Himself the way, and called upon all men to fulfil the end of their being, and to glorify God, by consciously devoting themselves to Him in time, and enjoying Him in sinless felicity throughout eternity. Of the mode in which Christ mediates this union between God and man, He said little beyond declaring the fact. He left it to His apostles to develop in detail the Christian doctrine of atonement. But He unquestionably associated union with God with the remission of sins through His death, on the one hand, and with His taking upon Him the part of His people and receiving them into Himself, on the other. The soul of the good tidings, therefore, which He brought, was that man, feeling himself paralyzed through

all his faculties by sin, might in Him rise from the grave of condemnation, attain to moral wholeness, resume the normal condition of his nature, and realize a humanity strong by experience, crucified with Christ, tried and perfected by suffering, victorious over sin and death, more illustrious in itself, and more surely confirmed in God's favor, than if it had never fallen. Whatever Christ as the Redeemer of mankind won, whatever was communicable of the fruits of His triumph over principalities and powers, was shared with His people: "The glory which Thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." Thus does "the son of the carpenter" lead us on, until we are encircled with the very glories of Godhead.

I shall conclude this brief summary of the good tidings preached by Christ to the poor, by placing in contrast two passages from two eminent writers, — the one an admirer of classic antiquity, and a despiser of the simplicity that is in Christ; the other a Christian minister. It is

thus Gibbon sets before us the best antiquity could affirm touching the future of humanity:—

“The writings of Cicero represent, in the most lively colors, the ignorance, the errors, and the uncertainty of the ancient philosophers with regard to the immortality of the soul. When they are desirous of arming their disciples against the fear of death, they inculcate, as an obvious, though melancholy position, that the fatal stroke of our dissolution releases us from the calamities of life, and that those can no longer suffer who no longer exist. Yet there were a few sages of Greece and Rome who had conceived a more exalted and, in some respects, a juster idea of human nature, though it must be confessed that, in the sublime inquiry, their reason had been often guided by their imagination, and that their imagination had been prompted by their vanity. When they viewed with complacency the extent of their own mental powers, when they exercised the various faculties of memory, of fancy, and of judgment in the most profound speculations, or the most important labors, and when they reflected on the desire of fame, which transported them into future ages, far beyond the bounds of

death and of the grave, they were unwilling to confound themselves with the beasts of the field, or to suppose that a being, for whose dignity they entertained the most sincere admiration, could be limited to a spot of earth, and to a few years of duration. With this favorable prepossession, they summoned to their aid the science, or rather the language, of metaphysics. They soon discovered that, as none of the properties of matter will apply to the operations of the mind, the human soul must, consequently, be a substance distinct from the body, pure, simple, and spiritual, incapable of dissolution, and susceptible of a much higher degree of virtue and happiness after the release from its corporeal prison. From these specious and noble principles the philosophers who trod in the footsteps of Plato deduced a very unjustifiable conclusion, since they asserted, not only the future immortality, but the past eternity of the human soul, which they were too apt to consider as a portion of the infinite and self-existing Spirit which pervades and sustains the universe. A doctrine thus removed beyond the senses and the experience of mankind might serve to amuse the leisure of

a philosophic mind, or, in the silence of solitude, it might sometimes impart a ray of comfort to desponding virtue; but the faint impression which had been received in the schools was soon obliterated by the commerce and business of active life. We are sufficiently acquainted with the eminent persons who flourished in the age of Cicero and of the first Cæsars, with their actions, their characters, and their motives, to be assured that their conduct in this life was never regulated by any serious conviction of the rewards or punishments of a future state. At the bar and in the senate of Rome, the ablest orators were not apprehensive of giving offence to their hearers by exposing that doctrine as an idle and extravagant opinion, which was rejected with contempt by every man of a liberal education and understanding. . . . The most sublime efforts of philosophy can extend no further than feebly to point out the desire, the hope, or, at most, the probability, of a future state."

And this is the echo which a Christian minister in the nineteenth century gives of that preaching which Jesus of Nazareth addressed to the poor:—

“His word is assurance ample and sufficient, who came from the bosom of God to tell us the wondrous secret of our spiritual and bodily immortality. But this once believed, who *can* believe it, and not acknowledge that it alters the whole complexion of his existence; that he has sprung with one bound from dust to angels; that he stands on the great platform of immortal natures, can see below him the whole universe, above him nothing but his God? Shall we not then awake, and know ourselves the immortals that we are? This world is but the womb of eternity. The Father, who has regenerated, has regenerated that He may immortalize. Sooner shall He yield His heavenly throne than hold it and forsake us; sooner shall God be no longer God than ‘the children of God’ fail to be ‘the children of the resurrection.’ Behold! we stand alone in creation; earth, sea, and sky, can show nothing so awful as *we* are! The rooted hills shall flee before the fiery glance of the Almighty Judge; the mountains shall become dust, the ocean a vapor; the very stars of heaven shall fade and fall as the fig-tree casts her untimely fruit! yea, ‘heaven and earth shall pass away;’

but the humblest, poorest, lowliest among us is born for undying life. Amid all the terrors of dissolving nature, the band of immortals shall stand before their Judge. He has made you to be sharers of His own eternity; the most incomprehensible of His attributes is permitted in its measure to be yours. Alone in a world of weak and fading forms, with all perishable, even to the inmost folds of the fleshly garment that invests you,—with the very beauty of nature dependent on its revolutions, its order the order of successive evanescence, its constancy the constancy of change,—amid all this mournful scenery of death, you alone are deathless.

“In the lapse of millions of ages hence, for aught we can tell, it may be the purpose of God that all this outward visible universe shall gradually give place to some new creation; that other planets shall circle other suns; that unheard-of forms of animated existence shall crowd all the chambers of the sensitive universe with forms of life unlike all that we can dream; that in slow progression the immense cycle of our present system of nature shall at length expire;—but even then no decay shall dare to touch

the universe of souls. Even then there shall be memories in heaven that shall speak of their little speck of earthly existence as a well-remembered history; yea, that shall anticipate millions of even such cycles as this, as not consuming even the first glorious minute of the everlasting day! For these things ye are born; unto this heritage ye are redeemed. Live, then, as citizens of the immortal empire. Let the impress of the eternal country be on your foreheads. Let the angels see that you know yourselves their fellows. Speak, think, and act, as beseems your high ancestry; for your Father is in heaven, and the First-born of your brethren is on the throne of God. Oh, as you read and hear of these things, strain your eyes beyond the walls of this dim prison, and catch the unearthly light of that spiritual world where the perfected just are already awaiting your arrival!"¹

The tidings, then, were good; worthy of that characterization which God gave of creation when it arose in stainless beauty, obedient to the Divine word. Sublime and convincing as were the credentials of Christ, in that He caused

¹ Archer Butler.

the blind to see, the lame to walk, and the dead to rise, still more sublime, still more convincing, were they, in that they embraced such preaching to the poor.

Having now contemplated, in its comprehensiveness and in its symmetry, the proof of His Divine mission presented by Jesus Christ to John Baptist, we find it established. The miracles were genuine; the tidings were good. Shall we still be "offended in Him?" What more evidence can we demand that He was, that He is, Divine? If we reject such a revelation in light and in love, are we sure that it will not one day come back upon us in lightning? Are we sure that, if we pass heedless by the Saviour, thus reasoning with us in time, we shall not, while our immortality endures, bear the weight of an unutterable woe, the shadow of an infinite regret? "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the grave shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection

of damnation." For my own part, I must conclude that Christ's testimony was satisfactory; that upon that testimony I am justified by reason and approved by conscience in risking my soul's well-being in time and in eternity; that He was the Messiah of God; and that whatsoever He said was true and authoritative.

CHAPTER X.

THE SCOPE OF THE TESTIMONY.

THE testimony of Christ had reference primarily to the works which He wrought, and to the gospel which He proclaimed. But its bearing cannot be confined within these limits. From the words of Divine wisdom which He spoke to the messengers of John radiates light, penetrating beyond Calvary into the future, and sending a piercing beam far into the past. It will be in consistence with the object of these pages to consider briefly the scope of His testimony.

Christ announced to His disciples, as we have seen, that He was to die. He coupled this intimation with another of a strange and momentous character, namely, that He would rise again. In accordance with His own words, He went to death. Every statement He had made proved true. By exerting a power omnipotent to control the laws and processes of nature, He had

removed the antecedent improbability against His breaking the bonds of death if He chose not to be held durably in their grasp. When, therefore, we find every one of the Evangelists affirming that He appeared in life after His crucifixion, and learn from Paul that He was seen by more than five hundred persons at once, we are reasonably prepared to credit their allegations. The testimony of Christ and the testimony of the disciples combine to certify the cardinal fact of the resurrection. That either of these testimonies could have been false was impossible; as witnessed by both, the resurrection of Jesus Christ stands forth as the best-attested fact in the history of the world.

Again, this Jesus, whose words were Divine, and in whose hand gleamed visibly the sceptre of the creating God, deliberately commissioned His disciples to witness for Him, commanded them to teach all nations concerning Him, and promised His Spirit to bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever He had said unto them. This is a simple fact, historically recorded in the unequivocal language of the Evangelists. When we are satisfied of its cor-

rectness, must we not regard the accounts we possess of Christ's ministry, by His disciples and the companions of His disciples, with a veneration not accorded to ordinary writings? If the promise of Christ is to us a guarantee of absolute certitude, we know its guardianship to be extended over that which just criticism ascertains to be the New Testament in which His Church received the record of His life and the statement of His doctrine from His earliest followers. Into the manner of inspiration it is useless, perhaps unlawful, to pry; it has seemed good to the Divine wisdom to veil it in mystery. Of two things only may we be perfectly assured; of the first by faith in Christ's declaration, of the second by an inspection of the books in which is contained the revelation of Christianity: that Christianity has been authentically and authoritatively transmitted to us; and that the characters and capacities of Christ's witnesses, employed in the work of transmission, were not overpowered and obliterated, but preserved and used. Had the individuality and the complete manhood of the writers of the New Testament not been preserved, it would have been impossi-

ble to construct a *historical* proof that Christ miraculously suspended the laws of nature. If the Gospels had exhibited evidence that their authors were in a non-natural state of mind, the narrative of particular fact which they contain must necessarily have lain under suspicion. Had they revealed, even, that poetic imagination which gives form to bodiless thought, and turns the white ray of truth into the many-colored thread of fancy, the man who sought only the naked circumstances of Christ's history could not have reposed confidence in their statements. But Infinite Wisdom decreed that, whatever the evangelic records might be in respect of inspiration, they should be undeniably as calm, as perspicuous, as plain and unimpassioned, as any historical documents in the world. The memory of honest and competent witnesses, in circumstances where it was impossible for them to be deceived,—the mental faculty to which justice appeals when a man is tried for his life,—this was the instrument chosen by God for transmitting the words and recording the works of Christ. And was not this method infinitely the best? It preserves for us the very sayings of

Christ. It photographs Jesus of Nazareth for succeeding generations. It transmits the Divine utterance; it chronicles the miraculous deed; it shows us the child in the Saviour's arms, and the tear which bedews His cheek. So far as reverence permits the exercise of judgment on such a matter, we may say that in all this the Spirit of inspiration displayed a wisdom infinite in its profundity, and a mercy Divine in its condescension.

As Christ's promise gives us assurance that the revelation of God's will made by Himself. would be authentically transmitted to future generations, so His whole relation to the Jewish religion of His earthly ancestry, and many of His express declarations, connect Christianity with God's revelation in the past. The Gospel history is one consecutive proof that Jesus Christ accepted the monotheism of the Hebrews, revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures, as the true religion, adequate, until He appeared, for the salvation of the soul and the requirements of human civilization. No candid reader of the evangelical narrative can fail to perceive that He imputed to the sacred writings of the Jews a peculiar and exalted character. "Search the

Scriptures;" these words fell from his lips; they referred, beyond possibility of question, to the sacred writings of the Jews; and if the New Testament contained no other allusion to the Hebrew Bible, they would impart to it an unspeakable interest and importance for all Christians. But, in fact, the religion of the Jews was the religion of Christ. To Moses and the prophets He appealed as His witnesses and forerunners. He was the son of David, the inheritor of David's royalty, though the diadem of Jesse's line encircling His brow shed a purer radiance than that of earthly gold, and poured its light on a wider circle than the mountains of Palestine. The temple from which He expelled the buyers and sellers was His Father's house, and it was to the God of Abraham He prayed when the silence of the Judean hills was broken by the voice of His prayer. True, He completed the rainbow-arch of Divine revelation. He realized every prediction, fulfilled every type, and illumined every shadow of the old dispensation; and it is not only consistent with, but required by His teaching, that the records of the Hebrew theocracy should be read in the light of Chris-

tian perfection. But it is plain that the testimony of Christ enables us to discern the asbestos thread of Divine revelation stretching through the whole length of human history. In one word, the authority of Jesus Christ may be irrefragably pleaded for the proposition that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are, in an august and solitary sense, the Word of God. As the two wings of the cherubim shadowed the mercy-seat, so over Old and New Testament are outstretched the wings of the mystic Dove, the inspiring Spirit of Jesus.



CONCLUDING REMARKS.

It is unnecessary to add more than a few words.

Can any rational mind, fairly considering all we have seen, continue to doubt that the appearance of Jesus Christ in this world is the most important, the central, the all-determining fact in human history? His influence has been at the heart of the greatest of civilizations, and, judging even by terrestrial analogies, that influence must ultimately remould humanity, working out the virus of sin and brightening away the blight of sorrow. The riddle of the world, the existence of evil and of anguish under the blue sky of God, may not even thus, to finite intelligence, be altogether solved; but the Chris-

tian solution is surely such a one as thoughtful, wise, and reverent men must admit to be infinitely superior to any which can be offered by skepticism. Chaos may not yet in the moral world of humanity have given place to cosmos, but God has said, "Let there be light," and Christ has come, the Light of the world. Long ages may yet elapse before His beams have reduced the world to order and beauty, and clothed a purified humanity with light as with a garment. But He has come: the Revealer of the snares and chasms that lurk in darkness; the Rebuker of every evil thing that prowls by night; the Stillor of the storm-winds of passion; the Quickener of all that is wholesome; the Adorner of all that is beautiful; the Reconciler of contradictions; the Harmonizer of discords; the Healer of diseases; the Saviour from sin. He has come: the Torch of truth, the Anchor of hope, the Pillar of faith, the Rock for strength, the Refuge for security, the Fountain for refreshment, the Vine for gladness, the Rose for beauty,

the Lamb for tenderness, the Friend for counsel, the Brother for love. Jesus Christ has trod the world. The trace of the Divine footsteps will never be obliterated. And the Divine footsteps were the footsteps of a man. The example of Christ is such as men can follow. On! until mankind wears His image. On! towards yon summit on which stands, not an angel, not a disembodied spirit, not an abstract of ideal and unattainable virtues, but **THE MAN CHRIST JESUS**. It is something to have a clear margin left for effort, a clear possibility marked for improvement. When humanity has become like *His* humanity we may pause; we shall then be aware that the clouds above our head have beamed into the unutterable beauty of heaven, and that the lilies of the field have glowed into immortal amaranths. May God Almighty hasten the consummation, and may we with passionate, steady-burning, unquenchable ardor, strive to know and to imitate Christ! Let us deliberately crown Him Lord of all. In practice and

in speculation, in intellect and in affection, in the family circle, in the social throng, in the political enterprise, in the inmost recesses of our being, in the slightest outgoing of our activity, let Him reign perpetually, unreservedly, supremely!

THE END.

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Testimony of Christ to
Christianity

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